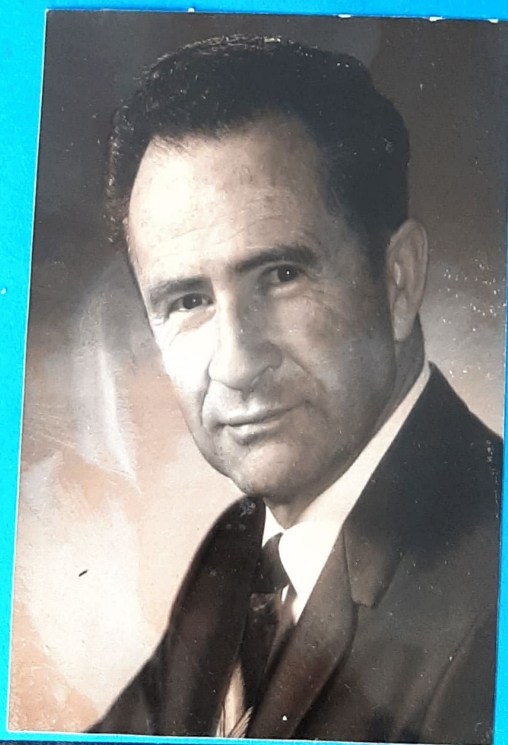


I Remember...

the MEMOIRS of

*Robert W. Honline*





Among my souvenirs (My Lenore)

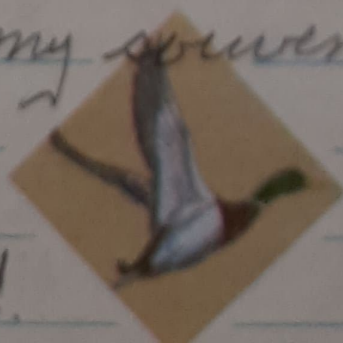
There's nothing left for me  
Of days that used to be,  
I live in memory,  
Among my souvenirs.

Of letters tied with blue,  
A photograph or two,  
I find a note from you  
Among my souvenirs.

A few more tokens blessed,  
Within my treasure chest  
and though they do their best  
To bring me consolation,

I count them all apart,  
Then as the tears drop start,  
I find a broken heart!  
Among my souvenirs.

Your Bob!



So true!  
2004



"To my precious Lenore!"

When day is done,  
And gone the sun,  
I think of you.

I think of all those little things  
We used to do -

This yearning, returning,  
To hold you in my arms;  
Won't go love, I know love,  
Without you life, has lost its charms!

When day is done, and grass is wet  
With evening dew  
My lonely heart is setting with the sun  
Although I miss your tender kiss,  
The whole day thru,  
I miss you most of all, -  
When day is done.

Her Bob!



January 2002

In the year 1997, and at the insistence of my wonderful wife Lenore, I started writing - very poorly composed thoughts called "My Memoirs". Lenore encouraged me and spent many hours in typing, editing and re-typing, sometimes far into the night.

When I would tend to become discouraged, she would bolster me up with suggestions and assurances that what, to me, seemed so trivial would indeed be of interest to the family and friends.

Starting the typing on her Smith-Corona word-processor, she experienced one difficulty after another, some minor, others very major until she could no longer get discs and the hard-drive went out, but she was not to be defeated, through Steve she got a computer and re-did all that she had done on the Word-processor on it.

She took classes, she read books, she was determined to finish my memoirs - Until on the morning of Jan. 15<sup>th</sup> 2001 I found her on the bathroom floor, the victim of a stroke.

God spared her life but took from us much that was very precious. The memoirs are just one of many "victims" of that terrible day.

— Thank you for trying so hard sweetheart - I love you! and always will.



## In Retrospect

After sixty-plus years,  
in retrospect,  
I stand again near the top of the low hill  
which lay between our grove and that of the Keckleys'  
(in the middle of what today is the 60 Freeway at Nogales Street).

I look across  
the miles of citrus and walnut groves;  
in the distance I can see  
Mount Wilson, and the Sierra Nevada range of mountains  
above my old home in Pasadena.

Somewhere in the distance  
I can hear the rumbling sound of a tractor  
and the clanking of the implement it's pulling;  
I hear the musical notes of a meadowlark's song,  
and, now and then,  
the raucous cawing of a crow.  
Apart from these sounds there is  
total silence.

I stand there  
as a boy of eighteen and wonder  
what the future holds.

War looms on the horizon.  
Will I be involved?  
Where do I go from here?  
I'm getting so tired of the uncertainty  
of so many things.

I hear Mother call,  
and I can see smoke coming from the "chimney"  
of the little house I call "home."

I'd better hurry!  
Supper's ready, and then  
I've got a pile of wood to split  
and lamp chimneys to clean  
before dark.



## **I REMEMBER ...**

### **The Memoirs of Robert W. Honline**

(Written in 1997)

## **INTRODUCTION**

You want me to write my life memoirs? Why, I wouldn't know where to begin! I know practically nothing regarding my family history ... I don't think I could go back any farther than my own grandparents. (I think I had some, although I never met them!)

And my life has been very uneventful, to say the least. That is, it has lacked any sensationalism that would make interesting memoirs.

But if you insist, I'll take a big dose of memory pills -- and see what happens.

The only three things of significance to happen to me were

1. When, on November 20, 1940, I married Lenore Cain -- the best thing that happened to me, up till then;
2. When, on January 20, 1946, our daughter Deanna was born -- the next "best event" in my life;
3. When, in June of 1950, I accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior -- that eclipsed everything else!

Oh, you want more details? Well, prepare to be bored. And I suggest you keep a bottle of Excedrin handy while you read.



## PART ONE: THE BEGINNINGS

1778 – 1918

### Chapter 1

#### My Parents

##### Moses Alfred Honline

I start this with much trepidation for I, of all people, know so very little about my family history. I suppose I always thought I had lots of time to get to really know my dad, then suddenly he was gone, leaving me as a boy of thirteen with many unanswered questions related to his family background.

On my father's side of the family I can only go back as far as his father, Andrew Honline who, along with his wife, Ellen Allen, lived and farmed in the vicinity of Hillsboro, Ohio.

(I'll digress from "genealogy" for long enough to mention what I've been told about the name *Honline*. We have a letter that was written to us in 1960. The letter was from "Mildred," a lady who had gone to live with my parents when she was in her late teens. She was an orphan girl, and her guardian at the orphanage sent her to live with my parents – at their request. She was never legally adopted by my parents, but they arranged for her education, and made a home for her until she was married to Arthur Goetz, probably sometime around 1920. She wrote to my mother faithfully, and sent pictures of her daughters, from time to time.

(I had never met Mildred until it was my privilege to visit with her and Arthur during a business trip sometime in the late 1950s. It was then that she filled me in on many details that I'd never known regarding my parents. But the letter she wrote to Lenore and me in 1960 furnished much additional information.

(Among many other things, Mildred told us that someone had told her that the *Honline* name had originally been spelled *Haenlein*, but was changed to the "more pronounceable spelling" several generations back. I must admit that *if* that was the original spelling, it certainly *looks* more *German*, which was the nationality of my paternal ancestors, but I'm glad someone along the line decided to anglicize the spelling. Now, back to my dad's heritage.)

Andrew Honline, my dad's father, was born in 1841, and was a soldier in Company K of the 90<sup>th</sup> Ohio Infantry, during the Civil War. To Andrew and Ellen Honline were born three children: a son, John Kenney, a daughter, Ella, and Moses Alfred, my father.

Andrew Honline died in 1890, and is buried in Sugar Tree Ridge Cemetery, in Sugar Tree Ridge, Ohio. Ellen lived much longer, until 1927, but I have no record of where she is buried. The oldest child born to Andrew and Ellen Honline, John Kenney, was born on July 24, 1867. He married Gertrude Bailey, and she bore him two children: a daughter named Mary, and a son named Carl. Sometime after Gertrude's death in 1902, Kenney married Lizzie Drake. Gertrude is named on the same headstone as Kenney's, but Lizzie, who died in 1935, is buried in another plot in the New Vienna Cemetery, and her grave marker reads simply "Lizzie Drake." It is not known why the Honline name was not inscribed. Kenney lived until he was seventy-six

years old, 1944, and, as already has been mentioned, he is buried in the New Vienna Cemetery, in New Vienna, Ohio.

Mary married Theodore Sanderson. They had a son who died in infancy, and a daughter, Barbara Ellen. Barbara and her husband, Gail Garringer, live on a farm near Jamestown, Ohio.

(Another parenthetical notation: Lenore and I had the privilege of meeting the Garringers when we drove to Michigan and Ohio, in 1983, and we visited with them again in 1986. Not only did we enjoy being in their home, together with them and their delightful family, but Gail and Barbara took us to see meaningful places. They drove us through the farmlands in their part of Ohio, and showed us the old home of Kenney, her grandfather and my uncle, then on to New Vienna to see the church they attended. We visited the New Vienna, Sugar Tree Ridge and Highland [in Highland County] cemeteries.

(Those were most memorable experiences, and we're so glad we have it all on video. Barbara narrated the video, and that makes it all the more personal. She shared her memories of spending time with her Grandpa Kenney and Grandma Lizzie. Of course, Lizzie was really her step-grandmother, but, as Barbara so tenderly said, "She was the only 'grandma' I knew, and she was a great gal!")

I know nothing about Carl Honline, Mary's brother and Barbara's uncle, except that he was born in 1897, and died in 1967. He is buried in the Highland Cemetery. Mary and Theodore Sanderson, and their infant son, Richard, are buried in New Vienna Cemetery.

The second child born to Andrew and Ellen Honline was their daughter, Ella, and she was born on October 24, 1868. She married John Lindsey, and they had one daughter, Edith. It is believed that Ella suffered from poor health and died in 1893, shortly after the birth of Edith. Ella Honline Lindsey was only twenty-five years old, and she, too, is buried in Sugar Tree Ridge Cemetery. Edith's married name was Barrett, and she was buried at Sugar Tree Ridge, in 1915.

The third child of Andrew and Ellen Honline was Moses Alfred, my father. He was born on May 19, 1873, in Hillsboro, Ohio.

Moses Alfred Honline, my dad – let's talk about him for a few minutes.

Born into a farming family, at an early age he evidenced the fact that the Lord had something other than farming in mind for "this young man" (himself). It was very apparent that he had an insatiable appetite for books. I imagine that he and his brother Kenney had lots of "words" about the work that was to be done around the farm! I'm confident that my dad wasn't "lazy," but given a choice between hoeing corn or cultivating the great desire of his mind for "learning," there would have been no contest.

Dad didn't just *read*, he studied! He took copious notes, and while still quite young he somehow managed to get a typewriter and learn to type. You might say he had an obsession with "learning" that remained a dominant factor all of his life.

### **Effie DeForest Wenger**

My mother left a "Family History" of her side of the family, and that goes back as far as her great-grandfather, John W. Wenger.

John W. Wenger (I don't know what the "W" stood for) was born in 1778, in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. In 1824, he and his family settled in Little York, Ohio, where he was a successful farmer. He was buried on a corner of the farm in Little York, in 1851.

One of John Wenger's nine children, Christian Wenger, was my mother's grandfather. Of Christian's twelve children, David was my mother's father.

David was born in 1844, and married Julia Ohmart in 1871. The family lived in the Dayton, Ohio, area where David farmed until he was stricken with typhoid fever. He died in 1882, at thirty-eight years of age.



David and Julia were the parents of my mother, Effie DeForest. She was born in Englewood, Ohio, on February 23, 1876. (I've always wondered about my mother's unusual "middle name," but never did find out why her parents gave it to her.) There was also a younger daughter whom they called "Cappie." I doubt if that was her real name, but it's the only name my mother ever mentioned.

I don't know the details, but I remember Mother telling me of a fire that destroyed their home, and which took the life of Mother's infant sister "Cappie," when she was only two months old. "Cappie" and her father are buried in a common grave in Woodland Cemetery, in Dayton. Julia, my mother's mother, who died in 1915, is buried next to them.

(It was of interest to me when Lenore and I visited Woodland Cemetery for the first time, in 1983, to see a large granite plot marker which stands about five- or six-feet in height, with the names *Wenger* and *Honline* engraved on it. In that family plot are the graves of my mother's father and infant sister, Mother's mother, several of Julia (Ohmart) Wenger's sisters, and other close relatives.

(The inscription on that large monument made it obvious to me that it had been originally intended for this location to be the final resting place for all of the members of the two families. But, as so often happens, things didn't work out that way. Today, no one by the name of *Honline* is buried there, and I'm sure none ever will be.)

### **Mr. and Mrs. Moses Alfred Honline**

A faded newspaper clipping tells about my parents' wedding, but I have no idea when or where they met each other.

On August 10, 1897, Moses Alfred married Effie DeForest Wenger. According to the news item, "theirs was a garden ceremony at the home of the bride's mother, in Dayton, Ohio." Their first home was in Westerville, Ohio, where "Mose" was attending Otterbein University.

DeForest, or "Dee," as my dad and her friends called her, was an accomplished pianist. She played for weddings, at various social functions, and performed in concerts; she was a very busy and popular young bride.

I did not come along to interfere with their lives until 1918, so they had many years to devote to their careers — my dad, especially.

While in college, he became known for his eloquent oratory. He was a member of the debating team at Ohio State University, and eventually became its leader.

Many debates had to do with a topic which was very popular in that day, and still is today, that of "evolution." He was a strong advocate of the biblical account of Creation, and debated some of the "well-knowns" of his day (the early 1900s) on that subject.

I believe that it was probably about then that he started writing *Man and His Ancestors*, which dealt with the absurdity of the evolution theory. A paperback copy of that work is still in our possession.

In an old scrapbook that Lenore and I have put together there are many faded, yellowed clippings from newspapers, magazines, etc., concerning Dad. Some of those articles go back to before his and Mother's marriage, in 1897. Most of the newspaper clippings do not have the dates or the names of the newspapers noted, but much help was gleaned from the 1917 edition of *Ohio Blue Book — Or, Who's Who in the Buckeye State*; Dad's name and achievements are listed there.

From a magazine of unknown origin, an article titled *A Noted Bible Study Man* reads,

Heeding the call to Christian service, Prof. Honline entered Otterbein University, and later Ohio State U., where he spent five years in undergraduate and post graduate studies, specializing in psychology and pedagogy.

(Cont'd.) Professor Honline was awarded the degree of Doctor of Literature from Otterbein University in June of 1911.

From a newspaper clipping:

For the past five years, Prof. Honline has been Educational Secretary of the Ohio Sunday School Association. Also, he has served as Director of Religious Education of the United Brethren Church.

Professor Honline is the author of two historical charts on *Old Testament History*. They strikingly outline the Old Testament world, showing interrelations of Hebrew and contemporaneous history.

Professor Honline has served as Professor of Religious Education and of Old Testament History at Bonebrake Seminary, here in Dayton.

From *The Dayton Daily News* (no date):

Friends of Professor Honline will be glad to know that a signal honor has come to him, in that he has been offered a professorship in the American University of Beirut, in Beirut, Syria [now, Lebanon].

I'm not sure, but I have always wondered if it was because of my mother's relatively poor health that Dad decided to decline the offer to teach in Beirut.



## Chapter 2

### Considering California

I have no idea how closely it coincided with the decision regarding the Beirut position, but Mose and Dee began seriously investigating the reported advantages of life in "Sunny California." Their planning eventually resulted in a move to Pasadena, California.

One of the major steps leading to that move to California, if I can remember what I heard and read many years ago, came about this way:

The Evangelical United Brethren Church (that is, the national "EUB" denomination) had for some time been desirous of establishing a retirement community for their leadership, and their families, in an area of the country where the climate was good. After considerable research over several years, a location in Southern California was decided on as being the most desirable. I don't know much about the legal aspect of the situation except to say that it was probably about 500 acres which were obtained. The community was given the name *Otterbein*, the same name as the denomination's college which had been founded in 1847, at Westerville, Ohio.

Otterbein was close to what is now Walnut, California, about ten miles west of Pomona, and five miles east of Puente (*La Puente*, now, but it was just plain *Puente* until probably sometime in the 1950s or '60s).

From within that larger community of Otterbein, an area was reserved for the retirement development, and it was given the name *Baker Home*, a tribute to Charles Baker, one of the founders of the Evangelical United Brethren Church.

Bungalow-type houses were built for residences in Baker Home, and a church was built on the southwest corner of Otterbein Avenue and Walnut Drive. That pretty little country church was established in 1912, and was given the name *Bell Memorial United Brethren Church*, named for Bishop Bell, its first pastor. Bishop and Mrs. Bell were among the first residents of Baker Home.

"Bell Memorial," as it was always referred to, was the little country church where Lenore and I would be married almost thirty years later – but more about that farther along in my story.

In the early 1900s most of that entire area was rapidly being developed into a sea of citrus and walnut groves, reaching for miles in all directions. The weather was good, water was abundantly available, surrounding acreage was being developed by additional independent property owners, and Otterbein began to grow "by leaps and bounds."

With growing interest in a possible eventual move to California, and perhaps because of his farm background as a boy, Dad became very interested in the agricultural potential of that which was already begun in the community of Otterbein – and particularly orange land. Growing citrus fruits would have been considered quite a novelty to one "born 'n reared in Ohio!"

Dad made contacts with people who were living in the area, and on their recommendation he purchased about 5.6 acres which were already planted with nearly 400 young orange trees – both navels and valencias. I still have pictures that were sent to my folks in Dayton, pictures showing portions of the property with the newly planted trees.

(Mother could never have guessed that someday she and I would be living on that property!)

Meanwhile, Dr. and Mrs. Rinehart (Mrs. Rinehart, Emma, was my mother's cousin) had moved from Dayton to Pasadena, California. Dr. Rinehart was a well-known medical doctor in the Dayton area, but he decided to make the change to California. He reestablished his practice, and soon became a successful doctor in Pasadena.



The Rineharts invested in a bungalow court in Pasadena which they named, very appropriately, *Rineway Court*.

As soon as the Rineharts found out that Dad and Mom were even vaguely considering moving to California, Emma Rinehart kept up a barrage of letters, telling my folks all of the virtues of "life in California!" She told them that one of their court bungalows would be available for them until they could get settled into a home of their own. Dad was getting pressured from all sides!

### **The Ohio They'd Be Leaving Behind**

It surely must have been difficult for my parents to weigh the pro's and con's of leaving Dayton, the location in the Miami Valley of Ohio which had been "home" to them for so long. Their home at 1522 Viola Street was in an upscale residential area of the city. Their families, their friends, my dad's career, and their social life were all anchored there. They'd probably attended many cultural events in the auditoriums of churches and concert halls. Then, surely they must have enjoyed picnics along the banks of the Miami River that meandered through the middle of Dayton. Normally, it must have been a beautiful river, but we have a large picture of the aftermath of the devastation caused by the flood of 1913 when the Miami River inundated the city of Dayton, and the countryside all around.

The Valley had been named for the Miami Indians, just one of the many tribes which were in the region that became *Ohio*, an Indian word meaning "great."

Many important events in the history of this nation are rooted in Ohio. It is believed that it was in 1670 that LaSalle first viewed the Ohio country, but it wasn't until 1750 that agents for the Ohio Land Company began to seriously explore that area. In 1799 the *Territory of Ohio* was organized, and four years later, in 1803, Ohio became the seventeenth state to be admitted to the Union. Eventually, it was nicknamed the *Buckeye State*, so named because of the buckeye tree which is the symbol of the state. The cardinal is the state bird, and the scarlet carnation is the state flower.

The Ohio River was the point of convergence for many routes leading into the interior from the East, in pioneer days, so all types of simple watercraft carried settlers into Ohio, via the "river traffic." It wasn't until 1811 that the first wood-burning side-wheeler steamboat began to travel on the Ohio.

After the completion of the Erie Canal in 1825, the early settlers in Ohio were so impressed that they put in their own canal, the *Ohio and Erie Canal*. It opened in 1832, and joined together the Ohio cities of Cleveland and Portsmouth. The Miami and Erie Canal, which connected Toledo and Cincinnati, was ready for navigation in 1843.

The first railroad to cross Ohio was the *Mad River and Lake Erie*, a narrow-gauge line; the first thirty miles of it led southward from Sandusky, and was operating by 1840. Roads for motor cars were not even considered until much later. (Automobile? What's that?)

In 1870, B. F. Goodrich began manufacturing rubber goods in Akron. Of most significance to me, however, is the fact that in 1903 the Wright brothers developed the first successful airplane – in Dayton! Of even greater importance to my mother was that before Wilbur and Orville began worrying *their* mother with "flying machine nonsense," they owned a bicycle shop in Dayton. That's where my mother purchased her first – and probably her only – bicycle! (From my earliest memories of my mother, I can't seem to picture *her* on a bicycle!)

(It was interesting to Lenore and me to see a replica of the *Wright Bros. Bicycle Shop* in the Smithsonian Institution, in Washington, D.C. The original shop was dismantled, then reconstructed as a part of Greenfield Village, in Dearborn, Michigan, one of those places we've always thought would be extremely interesting to visit "someday.")

Now I'll put away the *World Book Encyclopedia*, and get on with some personal history.



### A Small Delay

My parents' plans for moving from Ohio to California met with a small (but important!) delay: It was on October 15, 1918, in Dayton's Miami Valley Hospital, that forty-two-year-old Dee and Mose, then forty-five, welcomed their first, and only, bundle of joy – ME!

My arrival on the scene must have been about the greatest thing that, up till then, had ever happened to Mose and Dee Honline. After all, I had kept them waiting for twenty-one years!

All I remember of my early years – well, I don't really *remember*, but from what I've seen in old yellowed pictures, I was fat and, I guess, very reckless. I've been told that while I was in the process of learning to walk, I slipped on a waxed floor and broke my right leg. Boy, I'll bet that caused pandemonium – knowing my mother and her overly-protective, antiseptic, child-care guidelines!

Anyway, I survived, and I don't know of any other incidents of major importance (life-threatening ones, at least) that happened during the first almost-three years of my life in Ohio.

EMMA RINEHART



RINEWAY COURT

1921





## **PART TWO: THE EARLY YEARS**

**1918 – 1925**

### **Chapter 3**

#### **Family of Three: California Transplants**

##### **Settling In**

Evidently my dad had sold our 1915 Studebaker before we left Dayton, because I've been told that we traveled to California by train – railroad train, that is, not covered wagon train! No Indian raids, no trail blazing through the Rocky Mountain passes, just an uneventful trip, and I certainly remember nothing about it.

It's as though I woke from a dream one morning in the summer of 1921, and found that we were living in Rineway Court, so it must have been about that time when my "I Remember" switch was pushed to ON.

My new surroundings weren't too bad for an almost-three-year-old. Dr. and Mrs. Rinehart had two daughters: Opal, an unmarried woman, probably in her thirties (she looked *very* old to me!), and Phyllis. Phyllis' married name was Jackson, and she had either two or three kids.

The only incident I remember that happened to me during our short stay (probably not more than six or eight months) at Rineway was the time when, after a heavy frost, the large above-ground fish pond in the center of the courtyard froze over. I was with my dad and watched him put his foot on the ice – very carefully! – to check its strength. I didn't realize about the "careful" part, so the first time I got a chance I climbed up over the edge of the fish pond and onto the ice. In I went! That escapade nearly put my poor mother in the hospital, and resulted in my getting "warmed" real quick!

Yes, my earliest memories focus-in on living at Rineway Court, playing with the Jackson kids, the Rineharts' grandchildren. And, of course, the fish pond experience! I was having a great time! The youngest of the Jackson kids was about four, and I was three; what one of us couldn't think up, the other one could.

##### **A New Itinerary for Dr. Honline**

Our move to California in 1921 produced a major change for my parents, especially my dad. For several years he had been teaching *Old Testament History*, and other courses, at Bonebrake Theological Seminary, in Dayton, as well as having numerous other major involvements. His resignation resulted in much turmoil, even with emotional overtones, as several newspaper articles, which I still have, testify to.

In addition to his teaching responsibilities, he was in great demand as a conference speaker and lecturer, not only within the United Brethren denomination, but in various churches and organizations. His reputation was widespread. In retrospect, it was evident that the Lord had



815 N. STEVENSON (MARVISTA)



OUR NEW 1922  
ESSEX - (YEAH  
THAT'S ME)



been preparing him for what his future would be after resigning from Bonebrake, and other commitments in Ohio.

### **Our First Trip to "The Grove"**

Now, back to "remembering" those early years in California.

I can remember "taking a trip" with the Rineharts, in their car, to see "our orange property," and Baker Home. It was a long trip for a three-year-old – about 20 miles. That's what impressed *me* most – it was a *long* trip! But I do know that my folks were very well impressed with the whole situation, and were getting anxious to get on with life in California.

In 1922 my dad bought a new car which I remember very well. It was an Essex, made by the Hudson Motor Car Company. Black, of course! In those days cars came in one color, and that was it!

### **Our New Home, and "School Days for Bobby"**

In addition to the car, my folks bought a home in 1922. It was on a beautiful tree-lined street in Pasadena; the address was 815 North Stevenson (later changed to Mar Vista Avenue). It was great to be there in a house all to ourselves, because that was when I got to have my first dog. He was a beige color spaniel, and his name was Sandy. I really had fun with him. I can't remember what ever happened to Sandy, but since Mother liked dogs, too, we managed to have an assortment of them during the years that I was a kid in Pasadena.

I started to school in 1923, the year after we moved into our home on Stevenson. That was for kindergarten, at Longfellow Elementary School – a few blocks north on Stevenson (Mar Vista, now), then west a little way, on Washington Boulevard. The Pasadena school system used what they called the "6-4-4 plan," with kindergarten as a sort of "prefix." Grades 1-6 were called "elementary school"; grades 7-10 were "junior high school"; and the last four years, grades 11-14, included the last two years of high school and the first two years of college -- "junior college." But those "logistics" were far in the future for me; coping with kindergarten "have-to's" was all I could handle then.

### **More About My Dad**

During this time, my dad had become deeply involved in a freelance lecture ministry that required his traveling by train, all over the United States for his "engagements," as Mother called them. He would plan his itinerary so that he could book two or three lectures in the same general location, then go by train to another area. Some of his trips would last for two or more months; traveling by train took much longer than by airplane, as he would have done now. Often Dad would bring a fancy silver souvenir spoon from a "faraway place" as a memento for my mom, and she was very proud of her collection as it grew.

I still have many of his diaries that give the locations of the meetings, dates, etc., and I can see that he was in nearly every state. In those days, that was quite an accomplishment.

In my scrapbook is a brochure which was used to announce a coming series of studies at Immanuel Presbyterian Church, in Los Angeles, and it states: "Dr. M. A. Honline is one of America's outstanding leaders in the field of Christian Education. . . . He has spoken in every city in America with a population of 20,000, or more."

THE HOLLISTON HOUSE



SHORTLY AFTER MOVING IN (1925)



WHEN WE MOVED TO THE GROVE (1934)



Today that would be nearly impossible except through the media of radio or television, but in the '20s communicating with large audiences meant an "in-person" situation. Also, in those days the "20,000" figure would compare with the population of today's major cities. These facts are good indicators of his popularity.

I remember home life to be different from that of the other kids my age. With Dad gone so much of the time, it produced a situation that was difficult for both Mother and for me.

When Dad was home, he would spend the majority of his time in study and taking care of correspondence, working in his "library." And library it was – with shelves lined with over 2,000 books.

But, even though Dad was busy when he was home, occasionally we would go to The Grove to "see how things were going." I liked that! It always seemed like a big adventure to me.

### Good Things Ahead

It was in June of 1924 that my folks bought a lot in the newly developing northeast section of Pasadena, on the southwest corner of Holliston Avenue and Elizabeth Street.

A building contractor was engaged, and the plans were formulated for a home with all of the amenities of the new homes of that time.

We moved into The Holliston House in January of 1925, and my parents kept the house on Mar Vista as a rental property. The Holliston House is the home I remember the most, the one with which I associate many fond memories. Yes, indeed! Those were happy years!



DAD WATCHES MILTON VALOIS  
AND ME PLAY CHECKERS

← (L to R) ME, MILTON VALOIS  
AND RAYMOND KAHN



WORKING ON ELIZABETH ST (1925)  
(THAT'S A REAL STEAM ROLLER)



KIDS AND FUN  
(I'M IN THE MIDDLE  
ON TOP)



BUD WHITE & ME



## PART THREE: THE HAPPY YEARS

1925 – 1932

### Chapter 4

#### Enjoying My “New World”

The move to The Holliston House in 1925 was great! As time went on, I made friends in our new neighborhood, and we had a lot of fun. But, also, by this time Dad was gone for speaking engagements almost more than he was home.

First Baptist Church, down on Morengo Avenue, was “our” church, but when Dad was out of town Mother and I went to Immanuel Baptist Church, on Washington Boulevard, because it was closer to where we lived. Since my mother didn’t drive, it was good that there was a church we could walk to. Mother wasn’t involved in women’s activities at either church, and she didn’t spend much time visiting with other ladies, but she seemed to keep busy around our new home.

I, as a seven-year-old, could always find something interesting to do, and my “new world” was made even more complete when *Ginger* was added to our family. Since we no longer had Sandy, the cocker spaniel we’d had when we lived on Stevenson, I could hardly believe it when my folks followed up on an ad they read in the paper: “Boston bull puppies, five dollars each.” *Five* dollars for a *dog*? I tried to not get my hopes up. But Dad and Mother agreed that it would be a ‘worthwhile investment,’ and I was so happy!

There were still several vacant lots in the neighborhood, and now and then a new house would be built, causing great anticipation as to how many kids would be living there. More kids meant more fun!

#### Idyllwild Pines

Among Dad’s many other responsibilities was one that Mother and I got to share in occasionally. It was sometime in the mid-’20s that he was named Dean of the Southern California Summer School of Religious Education. Their teaching sessions were held in the summer, at Idyllwild Pines, a conference center in the community of Idyllwild, in the San Jacinto Mountains of Southern California.

Dad enjoyed this ministry very much, and would always work it into his busy itinerant schedule. Three camps (sessions) were scheduled each year, usually in the months of July and August. The camps were separate from one another – no co-ed activities in those days! There would be a week-long boys camp, then a girls camp, then an adult, or family, camp. The “boys” and “girls” were young adults, age twenty, and above.

The conferees were housed in tents, and even the dining room was a large tent. The lecture rooms were in two different buildings, the Administration building, and Emerson Hall. The class sessions were held in the mornings, and the afternoons were “free time.” The evenings,

after dinner (*supper*, back in those “olden days”), were delightful: “vespers” at “Inspiration Point,” and always a big campfire and lots of singing.

It was always such a treat when Mother and I would get to go to “Camp” with Dad – I have many fond memories of Idyllwild Pines summer conferences.

### **My First Bicycle**

I’ve already told about Mom and her first bicycle, and the fact that she got it at the bicycle shop owned by the Wright Brothers, in Dayton, Ohio. Now I’d like to tell about getting my first bike.

I was probably about seven years old when my dad took me down to John’s Bicycle Shop in Pasadena, and we drove back home in our Essex with my brand new bicycle in the back seat – or tied onto the running board. I don’t really remember for sure just how we got it home; the important thing is that I had it! Boy, was I excited! (Mother was sure I’d break my neck, or something.)

I remember that one day, a long time after I’d gotten my first bike – when I was around eleven, or so, I took time out to figure that I was riding my bike at least 20 miles a day – except on Sundays. That was the only way to get to where I needed to go, and at that age there seemed to be a lot of places to go, and a lot of things to do. Some were for fun stuff, and some were necessary – like to school, and errands for my mom. And, of course, there were other involvements that I’ll tell about later on.

In those days bikes were the old coaster-brakes type, with no such thing as a down-shifting derailleur, so what you did, you did on your own. My legs became hard as steel! That helped to put me in the right physical condition for what would become my favorite track event after a few more years – pole vaulting.

### **“Radio” Turned Me On**

When I was around eight years old I got acquainted with Bill Shipley – he was probably about ten when I first met him. He and his family lived a few blocks east of our home, and he and I seemed to “click.” Bill and his older brother, Sam, were into electrical stuff – particularly elementary radios, and I was fascinated. I believe it was Bill who first gave me a sketch of how to wire a crystal set.

I went home and proceeded to make my first one. I strung an antenna wire the length of the house, even on over to one end of the garage, with two lead-in wires – one into the breakfast nook, and the other into the east side of the garage. That one led into what I had declared to be my “radio shack.”

Crystal sets were fun for an eight-year old! They required no electrical current, but with a good crystal and the proper atmospheric conditions you could get San Francisco, and a few times I even got Denver, Colorado! You could always get KFI, and one or two other local stations. You had to wear earphones, so it made you feel important!

When Dad came home he was excited about my new interest. One day after a trip to town, and without telling me that he was going to do it, he brought home a large old radio that he had bought – it was just for me to use for parts, etc. Boy! Was I ever excited!

Now, with a storehouse of parts at my disposal (the old radio), I decided to build a battery-powered one-tube receiver. Sometime before, I had found a wiring diagram in a



magazine, and I had kept it – hoping that someday I might be able to build one, and now was my opportunity.

Building that receiver was much more technically challenging than I had anticipated, but what fun it was! One thing I hadn't counted on was the cost of the batteries that were needed to operate it. I believe it required two "A" batteries that were about the size of pint-size thermos bottles, and one "B" battery which was rectangular in shape, and weighed two or three pounds. I had to pool my resources in order to get them (and there was probably a bit of financial help from Dad!).

After some minor adjustments, I was able to get it to working great. I could get all of the Los Angeles stations – probably four or five, in those days. But, since there was no amplification of signal that would have been required for using a speaker, earphones were still required. That did have its advantages though, since Mother didn't think I should be listening to the "big bands," especially the *B. A. Rolf, and the Lucky Strike Orchestra Hit Parade* program playing the top ten tunes of the week. So, as I've already said, having to use earphones did have its advantages.

That was really a fun project, but I had no way of knowing how useful that radio would be in the years to come.



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"WE"



## Chapter 5

### Charles A. Lindbergh, My Hero

As a youngster I was always interested, *fascinated* is probably a better word, with aeroplanes (yes, that was the correct spelling in the early years). Whenever I would hear one, I would run into the house to get the *field glasses*, as we called the old beat up pair of binoculars, then back outdoors to strain my eyes to see all I could. By the time I was eight or nine I could “argue aeroplanes” with any of the kids on the block (and often did!).

Mother, naturally, was very much opposed to my interest in aeroplanes; she was sure I would become a *flyer*.

Dad, as usual, took a different view because he shared my interest in aviation. When an air show in the area would coincide with his being at home, off we’d go – much to Mother’s despair. I’m sure she was amazed when we’d return home safely!

I well remember the Lindbergh flight across the Atlantic, in 1927. I had listened to all of the news on the radio, I knew the names of the various individuals who were either preparing to “be the first to make that flight,” or had already attempted it and, for one reason or another, had failed. Many had crashed and lost their lives in the attempt. A \$25,000 prize had been offered to the first person to cross the Atlantic non-stop, and Charles A. Lindbergh, a young Air Mail pilot, was determined to win that money.

A group of businessmen and citizens in St. Louis had raised the necessary funds for him to have a plane built, one which would meet his specific requirements. Research narrowed down interested companies, and it was the Ryan Aircraft Company, in San Diego, who was contracted for the job. Ryan agreed to let Lindbergh work with their people in the design and fabrication of a plane built specifically to meet the stringent requirements for that long-distance, non-stop flight.

The fuel tank had to be large enough to carry 400 gallons of gas. Where to put it? Lindbergh was a good and practical engineer, as well as a pilot, and he knew it should be mounted as near as possible to the CG (center of gravity) of the aircraft. That meant locating it just forward of the instrument panel which eliminated any forward vision, and any need for a windshield. Forward vision would have to be obtained as best he could from the side windows.

Another major factor was the requirement for an airfoil designed to give the wing a high lift-to-drag ratio, a mandatory factor because of the weight of the fuel tank.

Amazingly, the plane was completed in only 60 days. Lindbergh did his own test flying, and it’s recorded that there were several things about the plane that he was not happy with. But basically the plane was sound, and the problem areas were not considered to be critical to the overall objective.

So, with confidence in the plane’s performance, on May 10, 1927, he took off from Rockwell Field on San Diego’s North Island, headed for New York. Lindbergh did make a brief stop in St. Louis to show the plane to the backers who had raised the money to have it built, and who had supported him with both money and encouragement through the past difficult months. Then . . . off to New York, and readying for the flight to Paris.

It was because of the tremendous support by the people of St. Louis that the plane was named the *Spirit of St. Louis*.

Since no one had yet successfully laid claim to the prize of \$25,000, which had been first offered as early as 1919, Lindbergh was now ready for his try at it.



It was on the cold, rainy morning of May 20, 1927, that he taxied the Spirit of St. Louis through the mud to the west end of Roosevelt Field on Long Island, New York, then turned to the east. With a full tank of gas the little plane was at its maximum weight capacity; with no flaps and mud on the field, the take-off was long and difficult.

But soon he was clearing the telephone wires at the east end of the field, and was on his way!

Thirty-three and one-half hours later he landed at LeBourget Field, in Paris, and was met by a crowd of thousands of people.

I followed all of this as closely as possible by listening to the news broadcasts on my little radio, and was very excited when I heard that Lindbergh had made it! I would never have believed that one day it would be my privilege to visit the Air and Space Museum at the Smithsonian Institution, and actually see that famous Spirit of St. Louis. Even more recently, Lenore and I have seen the replica of the little plane which is on display at the Air and Space Museum in San Diego's Balboa Park.

After all of the excitement had died down, Charles A. Lindbergh wrote a book in which he told the story of the flight in interesting detail. The book was simply titled *WE*, just his little plane and himself. I believe my dad probably bought one of the first copies, and after he got through reading it, I got my chance to do so.

There's an interesting sideline regarding that book which was written by Lindbergh, and I want to tell about it. When it became my mother's task to dispose of a large part of Dad's library of more than 2,000 books, she gave many of his theological books to Redlands University. A lot of the other books (including accounts of the Civil War, of which Dad was an ardent student) were given to Idyllwild Pines for the library there.

Dad always encouraged me to read, and he let me know I was welcome to take books from his library shelves – if I was careful to put them back in the right places. Most of his books looked big, black, 'n boring to me, but I really did enjoy those Civil War books! Too, I was glad that he also liked some of the fiction adventure stories by contemporary authors. I reveled in reading stories about the Canadian North, written by James Oliver Curwood; the "Wild West" books by Zane Grey were great; another of my favorite authors was Booth Tarkington. But *WE* was a treasure for more reasons than one.

As time passed by, I'd look for one or the other of those favorite books. But they were nowhere to be found! It was obvious that they'd been included with the others that had been donated, and that was a real disappointment to me. Now and then I'd mention different ones to Lenore, and I suppose I usually placed special emphasis on *WE*, the book by Lindbergh. I didn't know that she'd begun searching in used bookstores whenever she had a chance, trying to find a replacement copy for me. She'd not been able to find it anywhere.

In the late '70s we took a drive to Idyllwild Pines – I wanted to show her around the conference grounds that I'd remembered from boyhood days. It was a pleasant surprise to find the place in such good condition. There were many new cabins, the swimming pool that I'd swum in with my dad had been redone, and the cabin where my folks and I had stayed – the one that was always reserved for "Camp Director and Family," was still there. (Gee, it looked little!) Emerson Hall was almost unchanged, and the Administration building was much as I'd remembered it. There was a dining *hall*, instead of the big old tent – a considerable improvement!

We just roamed around – no one seemed to pay any attention to us. We wandered into the Administration building and found that one large section of it was serving as the library. We went our separate ways then, just out of curiosity we wondered if we might find any books that would appear to have been my dad's. Without saying anything to me, Lenore spotted the worn volume *WE*! She quickly slid it behind the other books on that particular shelf, made a mental



note of "which shelf," but made no mention of her discovery during our drive back to our home in Yorba Linda.

Still without my knowing anything about it, she wrote a letter telling the story behind the book, acknowledged that she couldn't be certain if it had actually been "her husband's father's book," but offered to purchase it from them – if they would consider selling it. She addressed the letter to the attention of *Director: Idyllwild Pines Conference Center*, etc.

Later, I found out that a package had come almost by return mail, and fortunately for Lenore it happened to arrive on a day that I was at work, so she could continue to keep her secret. Along with the book was a personal letter from Walt and Neva Schlenz; by that time he had been director there for many years. They insisted the book was to be a gift, but they also wanted to meet us – because of all they'd heard and read about my dad, and the positive influence he had been in the early days of Idyllwild Pines conferences. There was an invitation for a certain Sunday – they wanted us to attend church with them at the little church there on the grounds, and to have dinner with them afterward.

The timing of these events was almost unbelievable – Lenore had the copy of *WE* to give to me on the fiftieth anniversary of Lindbergh's historic flight, and within just a few more days we enjoyed the first of several delightful times with Walt and Neva. We were even invited to attend the retirement luncheon which honored them a few years ago, and during the program much was said about Dr. M. A. Honline. Lenore and I were each asked to say a few words, too. In her comments, Lenore said how thankful she was for Lindbergh's successful flight across the Atlantic; that, except for that event, we probably would never have met the Schlenzes. Of course she explained, and the people in attendance seemed to enjoy her story.

Now, anytime we drive to Idyllwild, and when we pass by the entrance into Idyllwild Pines Conference Center, much nostalgia crowds into my mind.

## Chapter 6

### Miss Cady and “The Lyons’ Den”

My school days at Henry W. Longfellow Elementary School were quite uneventful until the fall of 1928. That was when I entered the fifth grade – and met up with the teacher by the name of *Miss Cady*. I’m sure she was at least 110 years of age. Whether true or not, I’m not sure, but the story went around that the *parents* of some of the kids in my class had had her when *they* were in school. (Maybe she was more than 110!) That fifth grade class was “sequestered” in an upstairs room that had a large cloakroom in the rear.

(Perhaps I should take time out to define *cloakroom*: It was a room across the full width of the rear of a classroom, partitioned off by a wall. That room was accessible by two doorways, one on the left and one on the right; usually there were no doors, just open entryways. Every cloakroom was outfitted with a row of hooks where kids could hang their heavy coats, etc., and a shelf – school-kid-high – ran the full width of the room, just above the coat hooks. That was just right for stashing away lunch boxes, and anything else a kid had brought to school that wouldn’t fit into his desk. Of course anything as practical as a cloakroom went out long ago.)

Well, I wasn’t in fifth grade very long before I learned that Miss Cady considered the cloakroom to be an annex for kids who were scheduled for execution – sort of a *death row* before being sent to *The Lyons’ Den*. The principal was a Mr. Lyons, and he was really a nice guy who gave the idea that he was stuck with Miss Cady – because she was probably the one who’d cut the ribbon for the grand opening of the school.

I got to know Mr. Lyons quite well, by virtue of the many hours I spent in his office – which, incidentally, was much more pleasant than “doing time” in Cady’s *lockup*. I got the idea that he felt sorry for me, and was glad that it was me and not him who had to put up with the old girl. Every once in a while I really intended to *try* to shape up, but those good intentions never did last very long.

On rare occasions my “transgressions” were somewhere in between “cloakroom” and “Lyons’ Den.” For those times I would “do time” in the hall, just outside the classroom – desk and all. It seemed to me that Mr. Lyons did a lot of “hall patrolling” (or maybe he *was* on his way to somewhere for legitimate “principal’s business”). Regardless, he’d always stop for a nice little visit on those occasions when he’d find Bobby Honline, complete with desk and books, in the hall – just outside Miss Cady’s classroom. He always seemed to understand the situation very well. I liked him a lot. In fact, that’s how I learned to spell *p-r-i-n-c-i-p-a-l*, the *school* kind: I (secretly) thought of Mr. Lyons as my “-pal.”

I seriously doubted that I would ever live long enough to get out of fifth grade, but I did. Miss Cady probably promoted me just in order to get rid of me. It’s hard to know for sure about that, but I do know that I did get through sixth grade with a minimum of difficulty.

Before concluding this little portion I should say that of all my teachers at Longfellow, I had no trouble with any of the others. It must have been a “personality problem” – or whatever. But I’m sure it was all Miss Cady’s fault, rest her soul.

Or maybe she’s still teaching – I’m not sure just where.



## Chapter 7

### "High" on Kites

#### *Next Saturday There Is to Be a Kite Contest*

... so read the announcement on the bulletin board in the hall. It was to be from two to four in the afternoon, right there on the playground of Longfellow Elementary School! Judging of "Phase I" would cover such things as originality, the quality of construction, and other things that I've forgotten. "Phase II" would cover flying ability, and *your* ability to control your kite. No purchased kites would be allowed, and no box kites – only conventional-shaped kites of any size.

I was probably around ten years old by then, and I never had been able to resist a contest. The fact that I'd only bought the 10-cent "High Flyers" (or were they 25-cents? That's been too long to remember!), and had never in my life *made* a kite, didn't deter me at all. I thought this sounded like fun!

I wondered where I would get the sticks. ... I thought about buying a kite and just using the sticks, but then I had another idea. I remembered that there was an old yardstick in the garage, and that it would be about the right thickness. But I needed *two*. So, when I got home from school I found the yardstick, then I dug around in a tool box until I found a wood chisel. So, by pounding the chisel's width (about ½-inch) with a hammer, time after time, down the length, I soon had the two sticks that I needed. Next, I took sandpaper and smoothed down the splintery edges.

Now what? I knew the string which went around the periphery, and to which the paper was attached, should have some means of being secured so it wouldn't slip off the ends of the sticks, so I put small V-shaped notches in about ¼-inch from the ends of the sticks.

Then I tied the two sticks together – the horizontal one on the outside of the vertical one, and down about six-inches from the top. Using the string from a ball that Mother had saved from grocery and "dry goods" store packages, etc., I picked out a piece long enough to go around. Starting at the top of the vertical stick, I tied it good 'n tight, then went around all the stick ends – until I got back to where I had started.

Now I had two sticks tied together, and a string going around the periphery. By now, Mother was getting interested in my project, and said she thought there might be some tissue paper in a closet. Sure enough, there was! I picked out a couple of sheets which I laid in the middle of our large round dining room table. I placed them in such a manner that the center of the kite would be one color, and the side corners and the bottom were another color.

I pasted the paper together, then laid the "structure" -- the sticks with the string – down on the paper, the whole mess in the middle of the dining room table. (Get the picture?)

Next, I cut the paper with scissors about ½-inch outside of the string, all around, then put paste on one section at a time, and folded the "margin" back over the string.

Now, the paper was attached to the "structure," and the horizontal stick was ready to be bowed. I knew that the horizontal stick would have to be bowed enough to produce good "pockets" on either side of the vertical stick, and that the "pockets" should be the same depth, etc., otherwise the kite would fly lopsided.

And I reasoned that if the depth of the pockets was sufficient to maintain even *left*, then a tail would not be necessary.

Next, a "bridle" was tied to the vertical stick at the top, stretched out to one end of the horizontal stick, then tied to the bottom of the vertical stick.

The string that would be used for flying the kite was attached to the bridle at the point on the bridle that corresponded to the end of the horizontal stick. (If this sounds like Greek to you, take two Excedrins as was suggested at the beginning – remember?)

Anyway, getting back to the contest on that Saturday afternoon: I had the only kite that flew steadily without a tail, and you can be sure that I was "right proud" of it!

But that was only the beginning . . . after that I made many kites, some little, some big. I even made one for Deanna when she was a little girl, and Lenore "took movies" while Deanna and I flew "our kite" together – at the park up in Lynwood.



## Chapter 8

### Kids + Dogs = Neighborhood Fun

Kids today probably wonder what we ever found to do for fun – no television to watch, no video games to play. Well, we didn't have any trouble at all. While living at The Holliston House we – our gang of kids which could number anywhere from two or three, up to ten or more (depending on the gravity of the occasion – and some were pretty grave!) – would always be involved in any number of things.

But, as much as I liked playing with the kids, things in general seemed to be more fun with a dog to call my own. When mixed together just right, kids *and* dogs have no trouble avoiding boredom!

Since Ginger, the little Boston bull dog, was no longer with us (I don't remember what happened to him), I was really glad when a stray terrier "strayed our way." He seemed to like our home, so we gave him a name, Billy, and considered "finders keepers." That must have been his way of life, though, because just about as soon as he'd come along, Billy was gone!

I was so busy with neighborhood fun that I didn't spend too much time grieving. Nevertheless, I was glad when we acquired Rowdy, a little spitz. I don't know where we got him, but I doubt if my folks had paid five dollars for him, like they had for Ginger. (They'd probably decided "dogs" aren't such wise investments after all.) No, I don't remember just how we happened to get Rowdy, but I sure remember what happened to him! He got run over. (It seems that all too often there are sad endings for wagging tails.)

So, it was a great day when Freckles came wandering around – up at Idyllwild Pines, one of the times that Mother and I were there for Summer Camp with Dad. We all really liked Freckles, another little spitz. We had no idea what her real name was, but we decided *Freckles* was appropriate because of the dotted markings on her nose.

Dad inquired everywhere, asking if anyone knew who owned her. Finally, when he was satisfied that someone may have just "dropped her off," he agreed to let me take her back to Pasadena when Camp was over. (I'm sure he left our name and phone number at the Conference Center office, in case anyone came looking for their dog. I'm also sure that I hoped no one would!)

After we'd had Freckles for a while, it became very obvious to my folks that she was going to have puppies. Big excitement! There was a worktable in one corner of the kitchen, so Mother decided that under that table would be just the right place for a large, blanket-lined carton. Sure enough . . . one day that carton turned into a "nursery." Really BIG excitement!

"No, Bobby, we can't keep them." Really BIG disappointment! So, when they were old enough the puppies were given away, but we had Freckles for quite some time. In fact, she was the last dog I had to call my own while I was a kid. Freckles was even "immortalized in oils," but I'll tell about that later.

A big part of our neighborhood fun was building skate coasters – most all of us guys got involved in that project. They were ancient forerunners of today's skateboards. No, I guess they were really more like a scooter than a skateboard, in that they had a wooden box nailed vertically to one end of a two-by-four with half a skate attached to either end of the under side of the two-by-four. That was the basic; if you wanted a *deluxe* model, you could add a number of accessories – at extra cost, of course. Some of the guys painted them up, even painted their names on them, then rode them to school.

The Demming guys, Stephen and Sylvester, lived a few houses south, on the east side of Holliston, and one summer we decided that we would build a coaster (for lack of a better name)



that would seat two, or "two and a dog." We used the wheels from an old wagon they had, and we figured it could be made to be "steerable" if we used another wagon wheel for a steering wheel.

I'll skip the boring details – except to say that the front "axel" (a two-by-four with a wheel on each end) could pivot around a bolt that we'd put through its center; it was controlled by the driver turning the steering wheel, which turned the broom handle, which turned the rope, which turned the front axel . . . see?

Bud White was a little younger than the rest of us, but he was big for his age, so he fit in real well. He never got involved in the actual *building* of our contraptions (no engineering skills, I guess), but he always showed up to get a ride. (Now I want to tell about the picture that Deanna painted as a surprise for my sixtieth birthday – in that picture, Bud and my little dog, Freckles, are in the back "seat" of the coaster, and I'm in the front "seat." And, by the way, that picture is what I was referring to when I mentioned a little earlier that "Freckles had been 'immortalized' in oils." What a treasure that painting is! It's a picture of The Holliston House, and it even shows our Essex parked in front of the garage. When I opened that gift, Deanna told me that she'd wanted to paint The Holliston House because it was the place she'd always heard me mention when I'd tell about where I was living during the "fun years" of my boyhood. How right that is!)

There's more to tell about those "coasters": We weren't always satisfied with just "driving and riding" – once in a while we waged warfare with our skate coasters! We rigged mounts for big "guns" with "heavy ammunition" (big rubber bands!) up on the top of the box part of the skate coaster, and we figured out that spring-type clothespins worked real good as "triggers." We'd zoom past each other in our personal "*unarmed* personnel vehicles," let go with the triggers, and shoot the rubber bands at each other.

Then there were the big peppertrees that grew on east side of Holliston Avenue, back when we were kids, and they provided challenges of a different kind. I'm sure that at one time or another Sylvester, Stephen and I (and anyone else that wanted to) had climbed every one of them. We had our favorites that we climbed the most; we'd just relax up there on the big branches . . . and discuss the cares of the day.

There was one ill-fated day, though, when Sylvester (he didn't have a nickname – it was always *Sylvester*) should have been up in one of those trees instead of where he was – the target of a passing car. The "traffic" probably averaged one car about every ten minutes, but there he was – in the wrong place at the wrong time. He was really hurt bad. There were internal injuries which required surgery, but he eventually recovered – and he was very proud of the scar across his stomach.

We played touch football out in Elizabeth Street, and a big gang would congregate for that! Dick Baulch was about my age, and he lived in the third house west of us, on Elizabeth Street; even though George Good lived a few blocks farther west, he was often in the gang; then some of the younger kids around were Linton Grey and Joe Holbrook. Yeah, there'd be more than enough for some pretty good action!

We never did get tired of playing "Big Ring" marbles – whenever we could find an area of bare ground that was large enough for scratching the outline of the "big ring." My mother would be curious about "how in the world did you get so many marbles?" Was I supposed to admit that we often played for "keeps"?

And spinning tops was great fun! Tops were made in a variety of designs – some had little holes drilled just right, so when they were flung free of the string (which required real skill for winding just right!) they would really *h-u-m-m-m!* Some were "dancers," and they would hop around, once they hit the ground – string-free.

Sometimes we would mark out a big circle about six-feet in diameter, then we'd see who could knock the other guy's top out of that circle – while it was still spinning. I often wound up with quite an assortment of tops, and sometimes I'd be down to about none – kind of like the



marbles game because, according to the “rules,” if one guy’s top knocked the other guy’s out of the circle, he got to keep it.

Then, at other times we played “Real Estate” with our pocket knives. We’d draw a large circle in the dirt, then scratch a line across the center of it. We’d “take turns” by throwing our knife until it *didn’t* stick in the dirt, then, when the *first* guy’s knife *didn’t* stick, it was the other guy’s turn. The object of the game was to “cut up your opponent’s territory,” mark off how much of his “real estate” you’d “gained,” and keep narrowing him down until his patch of “real estate” was so small that he could no longer step one foot inside the area he had left.

When none of the about seemed exciting enough, we’d go butterfly chasing – with our butterfly nets. What a sight we must have been! All it took was for one guy to see a “Swallow Tail” and we’d all be after it. It’s a wonder that the neighbors didn’t call the dog catcher to come after *us* with *his* business-size “net.”

The *Kress* store, down on Colorado Boulevard, always had a good supply of “affordable” kites – and our gang of kids kept up their sales – especially in the springtime. Flying kites and chasing butterflies must have been hard on the neighborhood lawns!

And I’ve almost forgotten to mention the times when two or three of us would sleep overnight in Keith Ramage’s back yard. (Keith lived on Holliston, just a few houses north of Washington, and on the west side of the street.) His folks had given their permission for us kids to sleep in their backyard once in a while in the summer. Each guy was responsible for bringing whatever he wanted to sleep on, and usually it was a fold-up canvas army cot, and a blanket or two. It was a lot of fun, and we thought it was big stuff.

Well, that was back in the days when the milkman delivered the bottles of milk to the house – about four o’clock in the morning, and he always walked into the backyard to put the milk bottles on the back porch. We should have remembered from one time to the next, but we didn’t! Anyway, the milkman probably saw us sleeping out there and used that as his cue to give the bottles an extra “clank.” He succeeded in scaring the bejabbers out of us, but we wouldn’t admit it to each other.

Television? Video games? We would never have had time for them! And even when there were no other kids around, I never had to coax very much to get Freckles to chase the ball down the sidewalk, or play *catch* with a knotted rag.

Those years at The Holliston House were really happy days!

## Chapter 9

### Some Country Adventures

#### A Little House for *The Grove*

One trip to *The Grove* (the name we always used when referring to our orange acreage) that I'll always remember was late in 1929 – I'm certain of the year, because I can still remember Dad and Mother talking about "the new decade that was just around the corner." Little did any of us realize what all that "new decade" would bring . . . and it was a good thing we didn't.

Anyway, what made that particular trip to The Grove so outstanding, at least for me, was that my dad had made arrangements to have a small house moved onto our orange grove property. It was at the time of a previous trip to The Grove that he'd seen that little house which was owned by Mr. Cooper, an up-the-street neighbor who also owned orange acreage.

As he'd thought about it more, my dad had decided that if he were home when the need arose, he would do the "smudging," instead of having to pay someone else to do it. So, in order to do that he would need somewhere to sleep. He had seen this little house (and I do mean *little* – probably about 12-by-15 feet), inquired about it, found out that it was not in use, so he bought it from Mr. Cooper (who was probably glad to get rid of it!).

It was decided that an area on the northeast corner of our property would be the best location for the house, but it needed a foundation. Two telephone poles were treated with creosote, then horizontally laid parallel to each other in trenches that were about ten feet apart. About eight inches of the poles were left exposed above the ground for the floor of the little house to be nailed to. (Now I shudder when I think about it!)

Mr. Jeff Johnson, a farmer who lived just north, on San Jose Avenue, owned a team of big bay horses, so my dad engaged him to move that house from Coopers', down the little country street on wooden skids, and onto the telephone-pole "foundation."

Boy! Was I excited! I'll never forget watching the men, and listening to them talk, as they discussed the best way to accomplish this monumental task.

Finally the hook-up was made, then the little house was hoisted up onto those wooden skids. Jeff was driving the team, "Barney" and "Nellie," and at his "Gid-yup!" those big bays laid into the harness! I remember watching the horses drop to their knees several times during the process of starting the load.

Eventually they tugged their load out into the street from Mr. Cooper's place, and pulled it on down the road to our property. Again, a big discussion ensued: How was going to be the best way to line it up with the telephone-pole foundation?

Finally it was in position, checked for level, secured to the poles with several nails about 6-inches long; and the excitement was over for that day!

Dad and Mother had fun fixing up the little house, over a period of time. They furnished it with necessary items that Dad would need for spending a night, or so, while smudging.

#### *Smudging? What's That?*

"Smudging" was the name given to the heating of a citrus grove by using "smudge pots" filled with crude oil, and lighted with the flame from a gasoline torch. For a grove the size of ours, we had more than 200 pots, and that made for a lot of work since a full pot of oil would



burn only about five to six hours. That meant that on a long, cold night (below 25 degrees) oil had to be carried to refill the burned-out pots.

Each galvanized iron pot was about eighteen inches square, and about twelve inches high. A (smoke) stack rose from the center, and was three- or four-feet high. The stack on a burning pot would get red hot, and produce a lot of heat. And it would also produce *lots* of smoke – black, sooty smoke that covered everything! (Evidently no one had begun to be concerned about “air pollution” back in those days!)

As a kid, it was fun to get to go out to The Grove with Dad – once or twice – when he was going to smudge. But years later, after he was gone and it was my full responsibility, it wasn't so much fun; in fact, *no fun* at all! Just work – both day and night!

### Fun Times at The Grove

Once in a while it seemed that I “had the best of two worlds,” when I was a kid. Having The Grove to go to from time to time was really great fun for this “city boy”!

When Dad was home for the brief times between lecture tours, he would frequently need to make trips to The Grove to see about business pertaining to the grove's maintenance, etc. He'd often have to “see” Jeff Johnson and another nearby neighbor, Mr. Keckley (of course he had a first name, but I don't remember what it was), since he hired them to do most of the work – irrigating, tractoring, smudging, etc.

Since my folks were citrus grove owners, they were members of the Walnut Fruit Growers Association. In this case, *Walnut* stood for the fact that the packing house and office were located in the community of Walnut, California, not for “walnut crops”; it was primarily a *citrus* growers' association. Dad often had some reason to go to that office for business matters.

Dad thoroughly enjoyed The Grove; it was a total divergence from his regular work. When it was possible, he would actually get involved in some of the work – irrigating, and occasionally smudging, and seemed to enjoy it (if it was possible to *enjoy* smudging!).

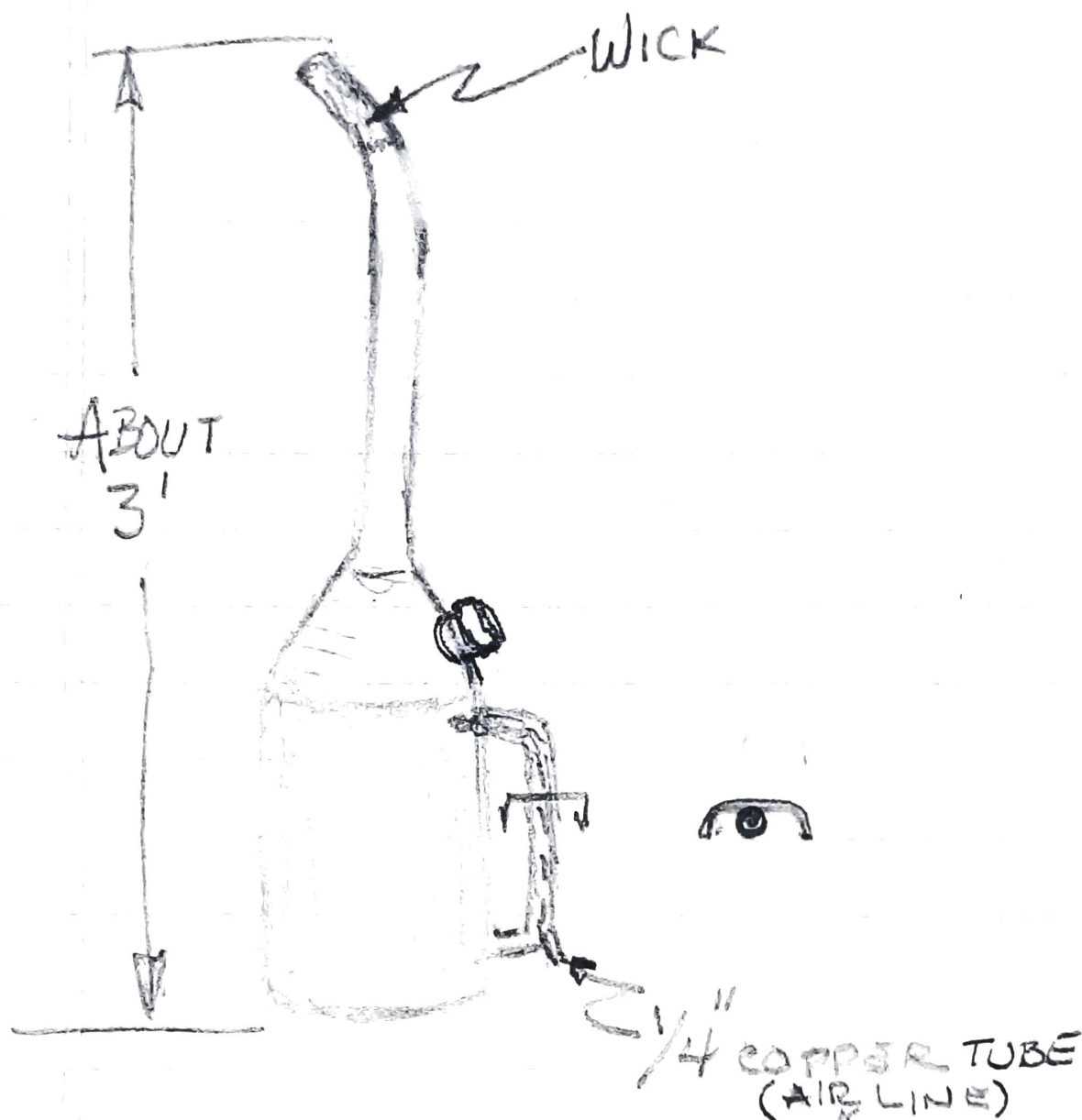
Of course I was always ready to tag along – if the trip were to be a “fun trip”! Usually, but not always, Mother would go along, too – it depended on how she was feeling. If she didn't go, she would pack a lunch for us to take along, but even if she *did* go she'd pack a lunch – there were no Carl's Jr.'s or McDonald's in those days! Those trips to The Grove were literally “a trip to the country,” and seemed like a family picnic day for us!

I was told that I could invite any of my friends to go along, and I usually did – the more the merrier! So, many a Saturday our sedan would be filled with kids, and we'd make the “long trip to The Grove.” If none of my “city friends” could go along, I knew I could play with James Shumard – he was lucky enough to get to live out there full time! His dad was a chiropractor in Puente, but their family lived at Otterbein and his dad “commuted” – five miles was quite a ways to drive to work in those days.

James was a couple of years younger than I, but that didn't matter to either of us. I think I probably envied him a little bit – he was always barefooted, and in bib overalls. That looked pretty special to me – I was always in my knickers, or at least long pants, starched shirt, oxford shoes, and socks. Of course, even that was more “casual” than what Arthur Shipman usually wore, if he'd gone along with us from Pasadena. *His* mother evidently thought that a kid should *always* be in a white shirt and necktie!

There was no end to the things we could find to do, once we got there. Dad would go on with whatever business he had gone for, Mother would read, or find things to do in *The Shack* (the name we'd given the little house that had been moved onto the property), and we kids were turned loose to do whatever we wanted to – within reason, of course!

One caper that I well-remember was the time we decided to explore San Jose Creek – it ran from east to west, about half-a-mile north of The Grove, and south of Valley Boulevard. We



A SMUDGE TORCH!

HELD ABOUT 1 GAL OF GASOLINE



had hoped that we might find a swimming hole with a sand bar . . . we could see it all in our mind's eye.

Once we got to the creek, off came our shoes and socks, and we rolled up our pant legs. From Nogales Street, the little country road that ran south from Valley Boulevard, we started west in the creek. At that point the stream was about four- to six-inches deep, and about six-feet wide. Stones covered the creek bed, along with an occasional old rusty tin can. Flowers of various varieties grew along the banks, bees were in abundance, and so were gnats of all sizes and shapes.

I don't remember who was the first to complain about his feet getting sore from the rocks, but I think we were all glad when he did – our "city feet" were not adjusting to this great fun we were having.

I think we had probably gone about a quarter of a mile when we noticed that the area had the greenest vine-sort of bush with "furry" leaves, and we all had to feel the funny leaves. It only took a few seconds for us city kids to be introduced to nettles!

Well, that concluded our exploration of San Jose Creek, so with sore feet and burning hands (and any other parts that had touched the nettle bushes), we hobbled back to The Grove to roast wieners. We'd decided to leave the exploring to some guys named Lewis and Clark.

After a trip to The Grove with Dad, sometimes just alone with him – or other times with kids along, on the way back home to Pasadena we would nearly always stop at Bailey's Cider Mill, which was located on the north side of Valley Blvd., near El Monte.

They made the *best* ice-cold cider! Miles before we'd get to the place, we'd all start begging Dad to stop for some. (Keith Ramage didn't like cider, so if he happened to be with us he'd always get Delaware Punch.)

Even Mother, if she was along, would *imbibe*: "Just a small glass of cider, please." It wasn't that she couldn't have drunk a large glassful, but it was probably five cents more . . . and "a penny saved is a penny earned," you know.

Those "trips to The Grove with Dad" are fun to remember.

## Chapter 10

### “City Life” Had Its Good Points, Too!

#### B-I-G Excitement!

Anything “airborne” was fascinating to me, as I’ve already divulged by relating my admiration for Lindbergh and his *aeroplane*, the Spirit of St. Louis. Well, I believe it was in the summer of 1929 that another event along the aviation theme locked itself into my memory, and I want to tell about it.

The *Graf Zeppelin*, on an around the world flight, was scheduled for a brief stopover at Mines Field (later to become LAX). I think it was Emera Kingsbury’s dad who asked me if I would like to go along with them to see it. Boy! Would I!

I’ll never forget the amazing sight! Hundreds of people were milling around that *huge* dirigible. The gondola was about as long as a Pullman car, and its wheels were resting on the ground. The policemen were keeping people from getting close to it. Boy! Was I impressed! I sure wished I’d had a camera! I didn’t but I can still remember the unbelievable size of the thing!

The *World Book Encyclopedia* (I’ve already used those books more during the writing of these memoirs than at any other time during the past several years!) tells me that the Graf Zeppelin was 800 feet in length, and 100 feet in diameter, and was powered by five 530 horsepower engines. It flew successfully from 1928 to 1937; it was then that it was succeeded by the ill-fated *Hindenburg*.

I still remember the excitement caused when, loosed from its moorings, it started its ascent – *directly toward the power lines!* The ballast was set to lift the nose to a maximum to clear them, but only by a very few feet! Everyone breathed a collective sigh of relief as the huge hulk continued to rise out of danger, then proceeded on its way.

That was an evening I will *never* forget!

#### My First Camera

For a long time, in 1930, there was a big announcement in the *Pasadena Star News* that the Eastman Kodak Company had big plans for celebrating their Golden Anniversary in a *big* way! They would be giving away *free* a special commemorative camera to all of the kids in the United States who’d be celebrating their *twelfth* birthday any time during that year of 1930! All they had to do was show up on one certain day at a drug store that would be designated in their city, or town. They had to bring at least one of their parents with them, and some kind of proof of their birth date. What a deal! I’d qualify! I couldn’t believe it – a camera of my own!

I remember my folks checking with the drug store that was named in the ad – just to make sure they’d have the cameras, and to find out what time they’d open on that particular day.

The big day came, and my dad took me to the store! A small crowd had already assembled, but we got in line, waited our turn, and I got my camera! My very first camera! What a beauty it was! The box shape of those early *Brownie Box Cameras* was covered with a special gold-colored material of some kind, just like it *should* look for the Eastman Kodak Company’s Fiftieth Anniversary!



After we'd gotten my camera, Dad dropped me off at school. Of course I kept my camera with me! So had practically every other kid in the sixth grade, since we were all in the same age bracket. We were all so excited over our new cameras, but immediately became disgruntled when the teacher insisted that they be left on the shelf in the cloakroom!

Miss Shirley, my sixth grade teacher, and I had gotten along just fine (quite an improvement over the "Cady-Days" of the fifth grade!), and I really didn't want to disrupt that good relationship . . . but I just *had* to figure out *some* way to get into that cloakroom!

I really don't remember what I used for an excuse, but somehow I managed it. Suddenly, there I was in the cloakroom, gazing at the long shelf that was lined with brand new, gold-colored cameras, including my own. What I had in mind, no kid could resist!

To make a long story short, everyone who owned one of those cameras found a picture of Miss Shirley's sixth grade cloakroom as the very first one on their first roll of film – when it was developed. And, to this day, not one of them has the foggiest idea of who clicked down the little lever on the side of his or her brand new Eastman Kodak Fiftieth Anniversary box camera.

Now that I'm thinking about that, I wonder if that might not have been just about my last "sinister prank" at Longfellow Elementary!

### **From Longfellow to John Marshall,**

#### **With Fun in Between**

When the end of the school year came around in June of 1930, it marked the end of an era for me. Of course, if those entire seven years at Henry W. Longfellow Elementary School (seven, including kindergarten) had been like my fifth grade – the "Cady-Days," it would have been like "finishing a sentence," instead of just a "routine graduation." But in spite of, not *because of*, Miss Cady, I managed to get through elementary school with some pretty good grades.

I really don't remember any details regarding my sixth grade graduation, but I'm sure Mother attended the ceremony. If my dad was at home, in between speaking tours, he would have been there, too. But the main thing, as far as I was concerned, was probably that it meant there'd be new territory to explore, and new "principals to test," when September would be rolling around. Hopefully I'd be able to avoid the "Lyons' Den," or whatever the equivalent would be, at John Marshall Junior High.

But – in the meantime – a whole summer for "freedom and fun"!

It's fun to remember the good times that our gang of kids always had over at the Goods'. They lived over west a few blocks, on Elizabeth Street, and there was a lot of neat stuff in their back yard. George Good was about my age, then he had an older brother, Fred, so through the years their dad had helped them rig up a chinning bar, and other kinds of "activity equipment" that boys liked to play on, and with. It was a big yard, with room enough for all kinds of fun, and that seemed great to me since our Holliston House was on a shallow corner lot.

I well remember that it was that summer between Longfellow and John Marshall that some of us kids began looking seriously at the patch of bamboo in George Good's back yard. That bamboo looked like just the right "makings" for what we'd need for learning to pole vault. We'd seen the older guys doing it, and it looked like a lot of fun.

After some serious deliberation, we finally selected a bamboo pole about two inches in diameter at the base, and about eight feet in length, and proceeded to cut it down. What we didn't realize was that the poles we'd seen the older guys using had been dried, cured and taped. Our "dandy" was *so* heavy because it was green – when you picked it up at one end, you almost couldn't lift the other end off of the ground! Well, we weren't about to be defeated by a minor thing like that, so we got busy making the uprights from two 2-by-4s which we set into the



ground. Then, we cut another much smaller bamboo for the cross bar, and drove nails into the uprights to support it.

In addition to George and myself, Emera Kingsbury was involved in this venture, too. Even though he, Emera, lived about a mile up northwest of our area, he was with our gang a lot. George's older brother, Fred, helped us make a "pole pit" which we lined with boards, then someone – I don't remember who – contributed a couple of old mattresses (probably complete with spiders) for us to land on.

(Just a note here about those mattresses – I'm sure it wasn't my mother who contributed them! I didn't tell her that we were into pole vaulting. It wasn't that my mom didn't want me to have fun with the neighborhood kids, but she was forever warning me to not try anything "dangerous." Not that pole vaulting *was* dangerous, but *she* would have thought it was! As a kid, I couldn't really understand that she was concerned about my being involved in activities that *could* cause injuries – with Dad being out of town much of the time, she was fearful of my getting hurt. Since she didn't drive, it would be hard for her to get me to the doctor, or to get medicines at the drug store. It wasn't easy for her to handle the responsibilities of what today would be called "single parenting."

(But like I've said, I didn't really understand all of that then; I just thought she was being a "killjoy." I'm not very proud of the fact that I didn't always let her warnings keep me from doing what I thought was "fun," and I must admit that it *did* keep me busy trying to keep her from finding out about some of my escapades.)

Back to the subject: With our pole, pit, and the mattresses for "soft landings" – *if* we happened to line up just right, we were all set! As I've already mentioned, there were the three (Fred didn't get into vaulting) of us involved at first, but after a short time there were only two – George and me. After just a little longer, it was just me. It wasn't so much fun then, so I began devoting more time to other things. That wasn't the end of my interest in pole vaulting, though. There'll be more about that later.

Of course "pole vaulting" wasn't the only thing we found to do during that summer of 1930, but it really seemed that in no time at all, just a month before my twelfth birthday in October, it was time for my "New Adventure": Junior High!

John Marshall Junior High was a three- or four-mile bike ride from The Holliston House, over east on Allen Avenue, and a few blocks south of Washington Boulevard. I felt like I was really growing up!

As I've mentioned before, in those days the Pasadena school system followed the "6-4-4" plan: six years of elementary school; four years of "junior high" – grades seven and eight; then the freshman and sophomore years of "high school" – grades nine and ten; the next four years covered the junior and senior years of "high school," and the first two years of college – today's "junior college."

What tumultuous years those next four were to be for me!

## The Tenderfoot

Long before I was twelve years old, I'd become very interested in the Boy Scouts. Some older kids I knew were already into it, and once in a while I'd gotten to visit some of the meetings with one or the other of them. Altadena's Troop 4 was the nearest, and it was the most active troop in our area. They met in the "Scout House" at the big Presbyterian Church up on Lake Avenue, and that was really a neat place for boys. It was fixed up like a rustic mountain cabin, and there we'd all kinds of Scout things on the walls – samples of the different kinds of knots, posters with the Scout creeds, pictures of wildlife, and all kinds of things.



Even though I couldn't "join" before I was twelve, I got myself a *Boy Scout Handbook*, and practically had it memorized by the time my birthday rolled around in 1930. I was proud when I received my Tenderfoot pin, and was very enthusiastic about the whole thing.

That was just the beginning of my involvement with Scouting.

## Paperboy!

It was while I was in the seventh grade that I applied for a *Pasadena Star News* paper route, and I was surprised how soon I got one! The guy who had had that route was moving away, so I followed him around on his deliveries several times so I'd be familiar with it. It wasn't long before I was ready to do it myself.

The day came that Route No. 16 was mine! As I recall, it was about a hundred-paper route, and was an evening delivery. First thing after school, I'd ride my bike home to drop off my books, then I'd ride on over to the distribution location, pick up my papers, deliver them, then get back home by suppertime.

Back in the '30s, a guy with a paper route carried his papers differently than it is done today. Of course today most paper routes are larger, both in terms of the *number* of newspapers to be delivered and the *distance* to be covered; consequently, deliveries are made by car. But even when a bike *is* used now, the papers are usually carried in bags that are hung over the rear fender. That does have advantages, but it also has some disadvantages.

In the '30s, most routes didn't exceed one hundred customers, and the papers were not nearly as thick as they are today, not even the Sunday editions, so they could easily be carried, as I'll explain:

On the bicycle, at the junction of the handlebars and the frame (or, "forks") there was a bolt with a large hex head. This bolt would be removed, then an L-bar would be installed by replacing the bolt through a hole in the L-bar with a flat washer under the bolt head.

The L-bar was a strip of iron about a quarter-inch thick, and about one-inch wide, bent a few degrees less than 90-degrees, with about twelve inches extending in either direction. The mounting hole was about four inches forward of the bend – on the horizontal leg, of course.

If a guy had a big route, and had to carry a higher stack of papers, he got a "sleeve" that was about two-feet long, then extended the vertical leg of the L-bar by sliding the longer "sleeve" down over it.

(These accessories could be obtained at almost any bike shop for a dollar, or so. I learned early what it means to "plow the profits right back into the business.")

The handlebars had to be the "Texas Steer" style, in order to carry the papers flat and unfolded. Then, when passing a customer's house, the "delivery boy" would fold the paper – with one hand, then throw it with the fold *forward*. With a little practice, you got so good at it that very few papers would come open. If they *did*, you had to stop, pick up the mess, and re-fold it. But such was the life of a paperboy – back in the '30s.

Then, as I recall, it was around 1931 that the *Star News* added a morning paper called *The Independent*, so I grasped the opportunity to make more money and applied for another route. Several guys I knew who had evening routes were doing that, too.

My morning route was in a different area of town from my evening one, and I believe it was about a fifty- or sixty-paper route. I'd pick up my stack of papers around five-thirty, deliver them, go home for breakfast, and then ride to school. After school, I'd take my evening *News* route, as I was already accustomed to doing. It was fun – except when it rained! Then it was miserable!

Yes, indeed! Delivering papers via bicycle on rainy, windy days was a problem to be overcome. It always slowed down the delivery, and that would often make me late getting home, or to school. But I wasn't the only one, since there were many paperboys in those days.

At the Western Auto store down on Colorado Boulevard, I got a device similar to today's "bungee cord." It was a small braided rope that came in many lengths, but I got the one that was about two-feet long. Springs were attached to each end of the cord, and a hook was on the end of each of those springs.

It was just the right kind of thing for hooking one end to one side of the handlebar, stretch the rope-part over the papers that were stacked on the L-bar, then hook the other end to the other side of the handlebar. It made it more difficult to get each paper out from under the rope, but it sure kept the papers from blowing off my bike!

When there was a really bad rainstorm, newspaper distributions would be cancelled. The delivery boys were supposed to call the circulation department – early! – to confirm a delivery cancellation. It was always good news to hear, "Deliveries are cancelled for today."

But if it was just a light rain, you were on your own. In those days, years before plastic "sleeves" (*plastic* of *any* kind, for that matter) had been thought of, you tried various ways to keep your papers dry. I used an old yellow "slicker"; it was never very satisfactory, but it was better than nothing.

I attached the opened-up "slicker" to the front end of the L-bar, pulled it back over the papers, then sort of held it as best I could between my hands and the handlebars. – Thank heavens, Pasadena doesn't get much rain!

There's just one more thing I might mention, a "hazard" in the "newspaper delivery profession": After finishing the morning route, then riding home for breakfast before going on to school, there'd be times that I'd really be about half asleep. All of a sudden – BANG! Next thing, I'd be picking myself up off the street – after having run into a parked car. It sure had a way of waking me up! It didn't happen often, thank goodness, but it was quite unforgettable.

Now, just to round off the "job duties," we carriers were also responsible for the monthly collecting from the customers, and that was the part I hated the most. Sometimes the people weren't home when I went to collect, or they didn't have the money that day, and I'd have to go back again.

However, I must admit that it was a good beginning in learning "financial accounting," because I had to learn to keep very exacting "money records." After all, I didn't want the *Pasadena Star News* to get rich(er) at *my* expense!

Somehow or another, I managed to live through it for nearly three years. I made about \$50.00 a month, and that was big money for a kid in those days.

## Pigeon Fever

As I look back on the time when I was about twelve years old, I wonder how I was able to cram in as many activities as I did. One that stands out in my mind, and from which I received great satisfaction, I want to write into my memoirs.

I knew that some of the guys in my "gang" were raising pigeons for fun – and for market (the Food and Drug Administration hadn't been thought of yet!). I was really interested, but I didn't see how I could build a loft on our corner property that had almost no back yard. Still, my interest grew and I found myself "talking pigeons" with some of the guys who were already involved – Bill Shipley, George Good, and others.

Bill and his older brother, Sam, had been raising White Kings, a breed of pigeon known for their size and market value as the table delicacy, squab.



I saw a chance to make a little money, in addition to what I was already earning from my newspaper routes, as well as have some fun, so I talked to my dad about it. I had already decided that a loft *could* be built behind the garage.

At first he wasn't too turned on to the idea, but after much talk as to my intentions, such as, who was going to be responsible for keeping it clean? was I sure I'd want to use my "paper route money" for any of the expenses? etc., as usual, he gave his okay. So, once I had his approval, I went ahead and built what I considered to be the best loft in the entire neighborhood.

Then I got started by buying a couple pairs of White Kings, and both of the hens were ready to lay eggs. So now I was into a hobby that would eventually become very exciting – not with White Kings, but with racing pigeons.

I don't remember just how it came about, but one day Bill Shipley told me that he had been invited to a meeting at the home of a man who was one of the founders of the Los Angeles Racing Pigeon Club, and Bill was really looking forward to going over there. He told me that the man's name was "Mr. Wilson"; he lived in suburban Pasadena, and was establishing a branch of the Club in the Pasadena area. (Several branches were already functioning – I don't remember all of them, but I do happen to remember that there was one in Long Beach.)

When the time came, Bill did attend that meeting, and what he heard there caused him to get all excited about raising and training racing pigeons. He told me that he was really anxious for me to meet this Mr. Wilson, too.

(Mr. Wilson, a man I had never before heard of, was to become a very important person in my young life. In these later years I've often wondered if he could have been a Christian – I would like to think so.)

So, one Saturday afternoon we rode over to his house on our bikes. He lived over northwest of the Rose Bowl, probably around three or four miles from The Holliston House. At that time it was a sparsely populated area, and probably unincorporated, so he had lots of space for his large loft of fifty, or more, birds. I was indeed captivated!

Mr. Wilson seemed dedicated to helping young guys who showed a genuine interest in getting a start. He asked a lot of questions as to what, if any, experience we'd had with pigeons, what our lofts were like, etc. It was obvious that Mr. Wilson loved racing pigeons and that he would not be interested in helping anyone who was not serious about the hobby, ones who might neglect the birds, or would not give them the utmost "TLC" that they deserved.

I told him about my "Kings" and my loft. He told me that if I was interested in getting started with racing birds I should keep the White Kings and use them to raise eggs that he would *give* me. I couldn't believe it! He also told me that my loft should be eventually changed to accommodate *racing* pigeons. (I hadn't known there was any difference – just one of the many things I learned from Mr. Wilson.)

Needless to say, I went home very excited about the possibilities! I could imagine myself winning the big San Francisco race! Oh boy!

He was as good as his word. One day Mr. Wilson called me and asked the status of my White Kings: Were there eggs in the nest? When were they laid? (Since a pigeon lays only two eggs each time, he was inquiring about "a pair of eggs," and it was necessary for the replacement eggs to be very close to the same age.) When the time was right for him to be able to match mine with a pair of his bird's eggs, he gave me instructions about the best way to transport them. I followed explicitly, and was able to replace my White King's eggs with the ones from Mr. Wilson's racing pigeon loft. I felt that I was on my way to becoming another Mr. Wilson!

Over the next several months, I received several pairs of eggs from him. To me, all were potential champions!

Now, just a brief word about the Los Angeles Racing Pigeon Club: It had been established in the '20s, and had a large, active membership –especially before the "Crash," and the resulting Great Depression. But even then, in the early '30s it was still very active with a lot of enthusiastic members.



There was a membership fee of, I believe, \$100.00 a year, but we young guys never heard a word about that from Mr. Wilson.

The Club sponsored two major races per year, and they were always on Saturdays, so there was no conflict with school. (Now that I think of it, it seems that back in those days very few hobby and sports activities were deliberately scheduled for Sundays. Could it be that it was assumed that most people went to church on Sundays? How very different it is now!)

The starting points for those races were Santa Barbara in the spring, and San Francisco in the fall. But I'm getting ahead of myself – even thinking about entering birds in the long-distance races was sometime in the future for me!

Before I go ahead with more racing detail, I should mention that while I've been talking so much about Mr. Wilson and his obvious desire to help us young guys to get started, there were also several other men in that Pasadena branch of the L. A. Club. In fact, there were some real *old* guys – probably in their fifties! (Yes, that's *old* to a twelve-year-old!)

There would be monthly meetings at the Wilsons' home, and his wife would serve refreshments. There was a lot to be learned from the older breeders, and they all seemed anxious to be helpful to us younger guys. They didn't seem to resent us at all. As I recall, there were probably between twenty and twenty-five people involved. All of them were extremely interested in the fascinating hobby of raising and training racing pigeons, so we always left the meetings really "pumped up."

Getting a bird ready for racing started early. When it was about six days old, the bird was *permanently* banded with a *numbered*, seamless aluminum band on the *left* leg. (A band was like a "ring," about 1/4-inch wide, and approximately 5/16-inch in diameter, so it couldn't slip off over the bird's foot.) The bands were issued through the Club, and each number was registered to the owner. That certainly provided an indisputable means of identification for the life of the bird.

(That also meant my "bookkeeping expertise" had to be expanded to include "statistics" in addition to "finances." I wish I still had one of my *Pigeon Records* notebooks – it would be fun to look at it now. I'm sure I did keep those bits of memorabilia for a long time, but when Mother got rid of stuff, a lot of my "treasures" turned up missing.)

We were encouraged to start training our birds' homing instincts soon after they began to fly around outside the loft with the other birds, and were getting familiar with the area. A bird would be about three months old by then.

I had made a box to fit the L-bar (the newspaper rack) on my bike, and it would hold three or four birds comfortably. The top was just a wooden frame with wire mesh nailed across it. I had made it so it hinged across the middle, then all I had to do was reach forward across the handlebars, pull the "lid" open, and boy! would those birds fly out!

At least once a week I'd take them for a short training flight. I'd carry them in the box on my bike, then release them about a mile, or so, from home – always in a northwesterly direction. Almost always they would fly up and land on the first telephone pole in sight! Regardless, I would take off for home, and by the time I got there, they would be there ahead of me – circling around! Or, sometimes they'd be on the ridge of Mr. and Mrs. Woodhouses' roof (the house next door to ours), and would come drifting down to the loft when it was *their* idea. But if they were hungry, they would be inside the loft – eating. (I should add that I never lost a bird while doing this short-distance training.)

By the time a healthy bird was six months old he or she had probably mated, if the loft had a large enough population. Pigeons mate for life, and immediately lay claim to a nest. So, following the directions Mr. Wilson had given me, I had refurbished my loft to provide nests for as many pairs of birds as I anticipated having.

All of my birds had had about three to six months of training by then, and had been involved in several of the short races that Mr. Wilson conducted to familiarize us with the equipment used in the bigger, club-sponsored races. He knew we'd need to know about racing bands, time clocks, and all of the other paraphernalia.



Participation in races was not mandatory, but if you did enter a bird, or birds, the owners had to pay a fee: \$5.00 a bird for the Santa Barbara race, and I believe it was about \$7- or \$8.00 for each pigeon an owner would enter in the San Francisco race. That was a lot of money for us kids, so if we were going to enter any of our birds we had to save up for our entry fees.

Eventually I got enough confidence in my birds to enter three or four in the Santa Barbara races, but only once did I get up enough nerve (and money) to send birds for the San Francisco race. They were ones which had done the Santa Barbara race – some, several times.

On the day of one or the other of those major races, the owner had to have his birds over to Mr. Wilson's by four in the morning. I would take my young birds in the box that I'd made. As I've mentioned, it would hold up to four pigeons, and would fit onto the newspaper rack that I'd mounted on my bike.

I was glad it was always on a Saturday, without school to worry about. I'd get my birds over to Mr. Wilson's house by four a.m., and finish getting them ready to leave there with him. Then I'd go pick up the papers for my morning paper route by five-thirty, as usual. After I'd finished delivering the papers, I'd go home for breakfast.

At Mr. Wilson's, those guys in our area who were entering birds would get the official leg bands that had to be put on each bird. The *rac*ing band was temporary; it was made from a strip of soft aluminum, and had a number impressed into the metal. Before crimping that band around the bird's *right* leg, then bending back the end of the band so it wouldn't fall off, the bird owner was responsible for filling out the entry form paper that was attached to a clipboard. There was a column for entering the official number on the *temporary* band and a corresponding column where the bird's *permanent* band number was to be recorded.

(It was fortunate for all of us Pasadena guys that Mr. Wilson was an officer in the Los Angeles Racing Pigeon Club; otherwise, all of those items would not have been available to us in that outlying area.) Once the "paperwork" was done, Mr. Wilson would give each owner a "clock" that was to be taken home – temporarily.

After our birds were banded with their racing bands, the pigeons would be transferred from the owners' boxes into larger crates that Mr. Wilson would load onto his pickup truck. He'd transport them to the Union (railroad) Station in Los Angeles, and there the birds would once again be transferred into very adequate shipping crates that were provided by the L. A. Club. Since the birds were not to be fed after being taken from their home lofts on the day of the race, those shipping crates had water dispensers, but *no* provision for food.

The birds were shipped by rail to their designated release destination – Santa Barbara or San Francisco, and a Club officer known as the *Starter* would accompany the birds. He was responsible for accurately "clocking" the time the birds were released from the crates to officially begin their way "home," then phone that information to the L. A. Club office. The Starter also took care of having the empty crates returned to Los Angeles, where they'd be ready for Mr. Wilson, and other men from each of the Clubs, to pick up for use in future races.

So, the club, a non-profit organization, certainly gave good service to all of its members who'd paid their \$100.00 annual fee – and to us Pasadena kids who were never reminded of that "requirement."

As I've mentioned earlier, the only space in our small back yard for my loft was behind the garage. Well, I should have mentioned that there was a peppertree back there, too.

How well I can remember that when I'd entered birds in one of the long-distance races, after a few hours had passed I'd take the "field glasses" (binoculars) with me and climb up into that peppertree. I'd keep gazing toward the northwest, waiting for the sight of a familiar bird. It's amazing how an owner can usually recognize a bird – not only by its color, but also its flight. Each bird has some characteristic that is uniquely its own.

When a bird was at last "home," it would push its way through the "bobs" and into its loft. ("Bobs" are close-together wire guards that hang vertically across the loft opening. A small strip of wood across the bottom of the opening ensures that they'll only swing *inward* – as the



would *have* to be there to take over at dark. As I've said, we young guys learned a lot from those "older" men who were into racing as a serious hobby.

As soon as the bird arrived home from the race – and was "catchable" – the soft aluminum *race* band was to be removed, straightened out, then pushed down into the "clock" which recorded the time, right down to the second. Once the band had been shoved into the "clock," it could not be removed – except by the Club officials. The bird owner was responsible for returning to Mr. Wilson the clocking device and all of the bands that had been issued to him.

Then the waiting began! Each bird's flight time was figured from the *time it was released* and the *distance it had to fly* – from the point of release to the owner's home. The results of a race were not determined until all the "clocks" were in to the Club office and the calculations completed, and that usually took at least a whole day – sometimes longer. The waiting – and hoping – weren't easy.

As I've been thinking back to these experiences, I can vividly remember a picture that Mr. Wilson had hanging on a wall in his home. It was a picture of a beautiful Blue Bar hen, a prizewinner. With eggs in her nest at home, she had made the flight from San Francisco in less than six hours. She had been one of his birds, and he was rightfully proud of her.

I wish I had pictures of some of my pigeons. None of them ever won any of the major races, but I sure had fun!

### Driver's Ed.

It was sometime before I had become interested in racing pigeons, probably around 1929, and during a time that Dad was home between speaking engagements, that he traded the Essex that we'd had for several years for a 1925 Hudson two-door sedan. It ~~was~~ black, as were most cars in those days, and I think it was called a *Super Six*. I thought it was beautiful, and just getting to ride in it with my folks made me *so proud!*

We'd had the car for a couple of years, or so, when just about the most exciting thing I'd ever experienced happened, and it was totally unexpected.

It was on Sunday after church that Dad drove my mom and me up into Altadena, instead of going directly home as we usually did. Altadena was mostly country then, and there were hardly any other cars on the road. It was a miracle that Mom didn't have a stroke when Dad called over his shoulder to me in the back seat.

"Bobby, I think it's time for you to start learning to drive."

I was sure that I hadn't heard him right, but there he was pulling over to the side of the road and turning off the motor. He proceeded to get out of the car, walked around to the passenger side, opened the door for my mother, and had her get into the back seat. I knew she had always claimed that she was too nervous to learn to drive, but it didn't occur to me to wonder how her nerves were doing just then!

My dad hadn't needed to say anything more to me! I was in the driver's seat – almost before he could get into the passenger seat beside me!

After a few minutes of basic instructions in "car driving," we took off. I know we were all surprised at how well it went – especially me!

It is important that I've taken time to interject this brief episode from that Sunday afternoon. I've always looked back on my dad's sudden impulse for teaching me to drive the car as having been prompted by the Lord. Of course that was just a first-time-thing for twelve-year-old me, but it was a "beginning." In just about another year, Dad was gone.



## Vaulting Disaster

My enthusiasm for pole vaulting couldn't be suppressed. However, after the fun times in the Goods' back yard had dwindled, I got so busy with my paper routes and my pigeons that there wouldn't have been time for the neighborhood practice times, anyway. But when I was in my freshman year at John Marshall Junior High (7<sup>th</sup> grade), I began working at it seriously – at school.

Because of my paper routes I could never stay after school for such activities, so I could only be involved during P. E. class and during lunchtime. I loved it! Some other guys and I would check out poles during the lunch hour, and vault ourselves silly.

It was while I was still in my freshman year that a track coach noticed me doing 8-foot vaults with no preliminary run. He took an interest in me, and began making some suggestions that were very helpful. As a result of his help, and my avid interest in the sport, I qualified for the junior track team. Since the track meets were held on Saturdays, I got to participate in several of them – running relay, and pole vaulting. Keeping up with my paper routes, Scouting, and my pigeons, crammed my personal schedule pretty full, but somehow I managed to juggle it all.

Back in those days we didn't have the luxury of air-filled pads for landing after a vault or high jump, as they do today. Instead, we had a boxed-in area lined with redwood 4-by-4s, filled with wood shavings and sawdust (and anything else they could find) to a depth of about six inches. Many a kid got minor injuries while landing in those pits.

It was probably in the Spring of 1931 that my turn came! One noon hour a bunch of us were vaulting as usual, but something went wrong on one of my landings and I struck the inside of my left elbow on the 4-by-4 edging around the pit.

I was taken to Dr. Kirsch, our family doctor (I don't even know if there were specialists in those days!). His office was upstairs in a building on the northwest corner of Washington and Lake. Initially, the worst part of the whole ordeal was that my mother found out about my pole vaulting then!

The doctor looked it over (he must surely have x-rayed it, but I really don't remember that part), then decided that the elbow wasn't broken – “only chipped.” He wrapped it, and then anchored that bent left arm to my chest by firmly taping my left hand up by my right shoulder. There it stayed – for about five or six weeks. Since his office was fairly close to The Holliston House, and because Mother didn't drive, I'd ride my bike over there every week, or two, as he'd said I should do. He'd press on the elbow, stand back and assess the strapped-down “disaster,” and decide it was doing okay. Never once during that time did Dr. Kirsch take it loose, or change the position.

Of course I had to temporarily give up my paper routes for the very first time, and do the best I could at taking care of my pigeons with just my one usable arm. My young life seemed to be in a real tailspin. Dad was away from home for a lecture tour when it happened, and my mother had to handle all of the details. She told me – in no uncertain terms – that never again was I to pole vault! I'm sure that the money it cost her to get me patched up hurt her more than the “broken” arm hurt me.

Even though all of the “physical stuff” was put on hold, I still kept up with the “book part” of Scouting, and didn't miss any of the meetings. That activity was very important and serious to me!

When Dad returned he helped Mother to see that the broken arm had resulted from an accident, and it wasn't really the end of the world. She slowly relaxed her attitude. Then Dad would be gone again, and the yo-yo would go back down! I'd just have to wait for him to get back before things would be on an even keel – for as long as he was home.

Finally the day came when it was time for all of the tape and wrappings to be removed from my arm. It had been totally immobile in that bent position for all of that time, so that was the way it wanted to stay. The closest I could get it to "straight" was about 90-degrees, and that *really* hindered my activities!

After about six months of a painful course of exercises, and very little improvement, the doctor decided to go at it with a different attack: He poured something from a bottle onto a pad of gauze, held it over my nose and said, "Now, breathe deeply!" When I awoke, there was intensified pain – but my arm was *straight*! I'd only *thought* it had been painful before that ligament-stretching procedure. After a week or two of leaving it straight, another course of painful exercising was begun – to try to "encourage" the arm to bend normally again. However, I just sort of learned to live with it.

Eventually my arm regained its strength, and was *almost* straight – just as it still is today. Little by little, things got back to normal. I even took another evening paper route, more to support my pigeon hobby than for any other reason. I was still thoroughly enjoying caring for my pigeons, and working with them in training for races.

And, painful as it was, I got back into pole vaulting. The arm gradually strengthened, the pain lessened, and it was a joyous day when I once again made the track team. Again, Mother was not at all happy about my involvement in track. She never seemed to understand a young boy's need for participating in such activities.

It made all of the haggling worthwhile when one day I was told by the track coach that one of my pole vault scores in a competitive meet, one that I'd participated in before the broken arm incident, had set a record that was still holding! I don't remember exactly what height I'd cleared, but it was something over ten feet, and that was before the days of the flexible poles that are now standard. Anyway, he told me that it had beat the best that any of the guys on the *senior* teams had done, and that really made me feel good! I would have felt even better if I had dared tell my mother about that achievement.



## PART FOUR: THE TIME OF TRANSITION

1932 – 1934

### Chapter 11

#### The Day the Sunshine Got Turned Off

Early in the year of 1932 the Great Depression was getting a firm hold on the nation. The fathers of several of the guys within my group of friends were out of work. Things were really getting tough for a lot of the families.

We were thankful that since my dad was a freelance lecturer, he apparently would not be affected. I remember listening to Dad and Mother talk about the situation, and Dad saying to her that it seemed he was going to have his busiest year ever. He already had a series of meetings scheduled for the months of February, March and April in the Los Angeles area. Then, during the summer months he would be involved in his Idyllwild Pines responsibilities as Dean of the Southern California Summer School of Religious Education, as well as some conferences and speaking engagements in the East which would lead into the Fall of 1932. Yes, he had a busy year ahead of him.

What had sounded best of all to me, a thirteen-year-old, was that for at least the first few months of 1932 my dad would be home! He'd just drive to the nearby engagements, then come back home. I knew he'd be in his study a lot of the time, but he always seemed to make some time for fun together. Things were always different when Dad was home!

As I've mentioned earlier, we were members of the First Baptist Church, down on Marengo Avenue, in Pasadena, and there we attended when Dad was home. Then, when he was gone on a trip, Mother and I would walk to Immanuel Baptist Church, which was only about half-a-mile from The Holliston House, down on Washington Boulevard.

The meetings that were scheduled for the Los Angeles area, during the first part of 1932, were planned as short-term "conferences": most of them would begin at a certain church on Sunday mornings, and run through the first few nights of the week – usually concluding on Wednesday night, or sometimes lasting until Friday night. Then, starting the *next* Sunday, he would be booked for another location.

(I should mention that I don't really *remember* all of these scheduling details, but I have been able to figure them out, somewhat, by looking through my dad's diaries. And, ironically, I do have a copy of the brochure that advertised the very significant Los Angeles Bible Conference that I'll now be referring to.)

Sunday morning, March 13, 1932, Dad, Mother and I were following the routine that was customary for the times he'd be speaking locally. That is, he would drop Mother and me off at our First Baptist Church, go to Los Angeles to fulfill his ministry, then pick us up on his way back home.

But we didn't know how different this day was to be. When he dropped us off that Sunday morning in March, we had no idea that we would never see him alive again.

I remember that after church that morning a man was waiting to talk to Mother. He told her that Dad had collapsed during his lecture at the Immanuel Presbyterian Church in Los Angeles, apparently having suffered a cerebral hemorrhage. He had been taken by ambulance to the Huntington Memorial Hospital, in Pasadena.

From then on, I don't remember the details. I do remember that someone took Mother to the hospital to be with Dad, and someone took me to Milton Valois' (*VOW-wah*) home. He was one of the guys in our gang, and his parents were very nice. I have no idea why I was taken to his house to stay overnight, since we'd never "slept over" at each other's homes. When Milton, and any of the other guys in the neighborhood, would go to The Grove with us, those were always "day trips." Anyway, I remember that's where I stayed.

Mom's cousins, Dr. and Mrs. Rinehart, went to the hospital, too, and stayed there with my mother. The Rineharts didn't attend First Baptist, so I don't know who relayed the news to them.

Dad didn't regain consciousness. He died the next day, the 14<sup>th</sup> of March, in 1932, at the age of 58. He is buried in the Mountain View Cemetery, on North Fair Oaks Boulevard, in Altadena, California. I faintly remember being at the cemetery, but I draw a total blank about the funeral. I just know that it was held at First Baptist Church, where we were members. The service was in a chapel, on the south side of the main sanctuary building. I don't remember if any of the pastors or deacons came to our home to comfort my mother and me, or extend sympathy. In fact, it's all a fog in my mind. Maybe things like that just don't register with a thirteen-year-old boy.

I had no idea of the time of transition that was ahead.



## In Retrospect . . .

Even though I have already progressed well into the text of these memoirs, I want to pause to insert this, well, sort of a "tribute" to my dad.

I feel that I have done him an injustice by portraying Dad as one who always had his "nose in a book," or was busy getting ready for his next lecture tour. While my dad did do a lot of those necessary things, he still found time for fun stuff, and he was really quite an "ordinary guy." I want to tell about some of the good times I remember.

One of the things we both enjoyed was playing marbles. *Our* game was a little different from the conventional game of marbles in that we played *our* game on the living room carpet at The Holliston House.

The carpet was a nine-by-twelve "area rug" with a Persian design. Maybe it *was* Persian, I never checked on its nationality. Anyway, right in the center was a round part of the floral design.

In the middle of that round design, we placed a marble. Then, Dad and I would sit at either end of the carpet and take turns in shooting another marble at the one in the center. Our "rules" said that we *had* to shoot from behind the border, which was also a part of the carpet design. If I cheated a little, which I seemed prone to do, I heard about it!

We kept score by counting how many hits each of us would get. The guy that "got the hit" had to "shag" the marbles. Invariably one or both would wind up under the piano, so we kept a yardstick handy for "retrieving" purposes.

Another very special activity took place out at The Grove. Whenever Dad would have to go out there, for whatever purpose, if it were on a Saturday, or school vacation time during the summer, he'd ask me if I wanted to go along – which I *always* did! Then he'd ask me if I would like to ask some of my friends to go along – which I *sometimes* did. It hadn't taken me long to catch on to the fact that if we didn't take guys along, Dad would often take a couple of guns, but *never* both at the same time! Dad loved guns; he had quite a collection, and he was extremely cautious with them.

After he would have finished with whatever business he'd gone out to The Grove to take care of, we would do a little shooting, quite a little! Sometimes we would target shoot, or sometimes we would drive to the hills south of The Grove and hunt ground squirrels.

I just have to brag a bit about what an excellent marksman my dad was. (I'd wonder if it was a skill that he'd developed during the years he was a boy on the farm, back in Hillsboro, Ohio.) He could "drive a nail," and he could "fan a candle," and I would stand there with my mouth wide open and watch in amazement! I thought it was really something to get to "start" the nail by tapping it into a post or tree with a hammer, then run to the "safety zone" in time to see the bullet from his rifle drive that nail into the tree or post. Other times, we'd put a lighted candle on top of a fence post then (back to the "safety zone" for me!) he'd put out the flame – without hitting the candle!

Not only did Dad patiently help me develop marksmanship skills, but he was always extremely careful with firearms, and taught me to be, too. As important to him as the fun of shooting, was teaching me how to properly handle a gun. (That training really came in handy a short time later when I would be working on a merit badge for marksmanship and gun handling in the Scouts.) Then, after we got home we always spent some time in cleaning the guns. They never got put away dirty – even if it meant staying up late, like after eight o'clock!

There's just one more thing that I must mention: Dad was an excellent checkers and chess player. A guy had to be *good* to beat him! He spent hours trying to get me motivated to be

something other than mediocre. But I was too active, and playing checkers and making half-hearted attempts at trying to learn to play chess just weren't my idea of fun. I hope that it wasn't too disappointing to Dad that his son didn't turn out to be another Bobby Fischer, instead of just plain Bobby Honline.

Yes, Dad, though a literary genius, an author, a lecturer, a Doctor of Literature while still in his thirties, would take time to play with his boy, and to become involved in his interests.

I often wished that I could have profited from his influence through my adolescent and young-adult years, instead of what seemed like such a brief time to me.

*(At this point in my Memoirs I want to say that losing my Dad was the greatest tragedy that could have happened to me at a time when, as an only child, I needed his guidance so desperately!)*



## Chapter 12

### Trudging Through the Dark

While Dad's passing was a great shock to both of us, it was particularly hard on Mother. For me, of course I missed Dad, but I had become accustomed to his being gone so much of the time that his passing seemed to me almost like he was gone for another of his trips, and I just continued on with my routine of activities.

Mrs. Rinehart – Mother's Cousin Emma, bless her heart, stayed with us for a few weeks. I'm sure that having her there for that time was a real "God-send" to Mother. I remember overhearing discussions between Mom and Emma that would go on into the night – maybe as late as nine o'clock. (That was my enforced bedtime since by then I was in my "teens," so it *did* seem late to me!) The topic of their conversation was always, "What *shall* we do?" (The *we* referred to Mother and me.)

Many tentative plans were considered, and many were discarded. Then Mom zeroed in on what I thought was positively ridiculous! From what I could "overhear," the idea seemed to go something like this: Mother would store our furniture, with the exception of a few pieces that we would need (and would "fit"), she would continue to rent out the house on Mar Vista Avenue, which my folks had kept as a rental investment, and she would also rent out The Holliston House – for income. There were no "pension plans" in those days, and it was fast becoming very obvious that we would be coping with our own personal "Depression," in more ways than one. Then, after I would have graduated from junior high in 1934 (that is, the tenth grade, since the Pasadena school system was structured on the "8-4-4" plan then, as I've already mentioned several times), Mother and I would move to the little house – The Shack – at The Grove.

(I couldn't believe what I was overhearing! That would mean I'd have to go to Puente for my junior and senior years of high school . . . but what about junior college? Puente schools were just following the traditional "8-4" plan. *What in the world is she thinking!* I wondered.)

As an alternative to that idea, Mrs. Rinehart offered Mother one of the bungalows in Rineway Court, where we had lived temporarily when we first moved from Ohio to California. Mother turned down that offer because she reasoned that she would need to have the orange grove maintained, without having to continue paying someone to do it. That "someone" was Jeff Johnson, the man who lived near Otterbein, just over northeast of The Grove. He had always taken care of The Grove – my dad had hired him to do that. Mother was one who never quite trusted anyone to do a good job, so by our moving out there she would have a *caretaker* she could personally supervise. *Me* – I was beginning to "get the picture," and I wasn't overjoyed. In fact, not at all!

So, even though the summer of 1934 was still two years away, things necessary to implement that move were put into motion. Emotionally, everything was dreary and "heavy", I felt like I was "trudging through the dark," and I'm sure Mother must have been feeling that way, too. She would just be quiet and teary-eyed a lot of the time, but didn't share her feelings with me. I think she was a woman who always wanted to come across as stoic and strong, always "in command."

Yes, the time of transition, spent in preparing to move to the Grove, was difficult for both Mother and me.

## My First Driver's License

A very real problem was that we desperately needed transportation. There we were with a car in the garage (I've often wondered who'd brought it back from Los Angeles, after Dad was stricken that Sunday), and Dad had taught me how to drive it. Problem: I was only thirteen when Dad passed away, so of course I hadn't even thought *Driver's License*. But we *had* to do something.

Mother gave her permission for me to ride my bike down to the DMV office (I suppose that was what it was called in those days) where I picked up a copy of the booklet that contained all of the information necessary to take the test for a driver's license. I studied that until I could almost recite it!

Then, with fear and trembling, Mother and I went down to the DMV office to explain our circumstance to some understanding person, hoping they'd let me take the written and driving tests. (I'd "snuck in" a few practice laps around the block before going, so I felt a fair degree of self-confidence.) I don't remember what made us think it would be all right for me to drive us down there, since I didn't have a "learner's permit" of any kind. Nevertheless, we went.

I did the written test first, and I think everyone was surprised at how well I did. Then came the driving test. It was really embarrassing to me when Mother insisted on going along! So, with her in the back seat and the DMV guy in the passenger seat (just like it had been that Sunday afternoon when Dad took us up into Altadena for my "surprise driving lesson"), away we went!

When the examining officer said *Stop*, I stopped. When he said *Turn*, I turned, remembering to execute the arm-signals correctly. (That was long before "automatic directional signals" had been thought up!) All went well until we got back to the DMV office. When I parked the car, and turned off the ignition, I forgot to set the hand brake, so I got lectured on that! But I *did* get my first driver's license!

I couldn't have been prouder – except for one fact – on the backside of the license they had typed in big, bold, capital letters the following:

**THIS LICENSE IS VALID ONLY  
WHEN ACCOMPANIED BY MOTHER**

Boy! I could hardly wait until I would be old enough to get a license that didn't have that disclaimer on the back!

## Chauffeuring Mother

There was so much to do in preparation for the upcoming move. Now that I had my driver's license, it was put to good use right away. We would drive out to The Grove nearly every Saturday so Mother could see different people about different things. Contacts had to be made to get various people involved in accomplishing various tasks.

I remember that our first visit to Otterbein was to see Mrs. Bell, the widow of the late Bishop Bell for whom the *Bell Memorial Church* had been named. Mother felt that of all people Mrs. Bell would be the most dependable one to advise about whom we should contact for the many needs that would inevitably arise.

So, loaded with good information and recommendations, off we'd go for my mother to find the people, and discuss her tentative plans. She had ideas about having some carpentry work done, and, well, just a lot of all kinds of work!

My folks had never intended that the little house, The Shack, would be lived in permanently. It had always just been "the place to stay" when Dad would go out to The Grove



for smudging, and would need to sleep there. One amenity that Dad had added for convenience was an indoor toilet. He'd had a septic tank installed, a distance from the southwest corner of the little house, to accommodate it. The thing had to be flushed with a bucket of water, but it was better than trekking down a "path to the bath" on the cold winter nights of "smudging season."

He had taken an army cot to sleep on, and he'd also gotten a Coleman camp stove for making coffee, or "heating water for tea," for Mother. (She considered coffee to be only one dose removed from poison!) Dad had put in a freestanding wood-burning stove for heat, and had bought two or three kerosene lamps for light. That was about the extent of the furnishings.

But Mother had decided we'd soon be *living* there! How could she!

### Beginning to Burn Our Bridges

I was about to finish my junior year (9<sup>th</sup> grade) at Marshall, and I could truthfully say that I was enjoying it very much. The curriculum for the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades offered some options – I guess they'd be called "electives." If your grades in math and science had been high enough during your 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades, you could "elect" to take "tech" courses, as opposed to the regular "liberal arts" subjects. So, of course the "tech" courses were just my thing, and I loved them.

In those classes we got involved in some basic electrical, mechanical and physics types of "problems": we had some shop experience, learning basic foundry procedures, and other related subjects. While I didn't realize it then, I could later understand how those classes had been preparing me for the engineering courses that I'd be taking in college – in the years to come.

Yes, eventually I could look back and realize that all of the experiences during that transition time prepared me for many of the future situations of life.

From our home on Holliston Avenue (which was too quickly becoming our "temporary" home!), I remember that Mother seemed to be spending a lot of time on the telephone – talking to friends, relatives, or anyone that she could get to listen to her about *temporarily* storing our furniture that we wouldn't be able to use at The Grove.

Of course, The Shack was too small to hold the big, round, black walnut dining room table with its six heavy matching chairs; the pretty (but prickly) mohair upholstered living room sofa and "easy chair"; the piano that Mother would occasionally play so beautifully, while Dad relaxed in his big chair (I'd usually pretend I was reading a book, or drawing a picture, instead of noticing them); the RCA Victrola, and the classical music records that Dad had enjoyed so much (how well I recall him listening to Enrico Caruso) – almost all of the familiar things that I'd lived with for as long as I could remember.

(My mother's big upright piano wouldn't be missed though: just after Dad had died she'd closed the lid down over the keys and never did play it again.)

Even I realized the twelve-by-fifteen-foot "Shack" that we'd soon be calling "home" wouldn't hold those large pieces of nice furniture. (*What will she find that will fit?* I wondered.)

For some reason that I could never figure out, she was opposed to renting The Holliston House furnished. It seemed to me that would be the most sensible thing to do – but then, what does a 15-year-old boy know about such things?

Then, in a very business-like manner, she began disposing of Dad's vast library of valuable books – some were donated to Redlands University, some were given to Idyllwild Pines Conference Center. I don't know how she decided *which* titles would go *where*; some of them were even my own treasured books!

I couldn't believe this was really happening!

## Meanwhile, Back at The Shack

Mother was concentrating on a lot of ways for making The Shack more livable. Acting on some of the recommendations she'd gotten, she lined up Mr. Holland to do some carpentry work. (Mr. Holland was a handy-man type who lived there in Otterbein. For his "real" work, he was a sales and delivery person for the Watkins Products Company, a popular line of home products that were sold "door-to-door," back in those days. But he was always glad to get some "side jobs" for extra income, during those Depression years.

(As time went on, I got acquainted with his kids, Joanne and Jack – they weren't twins, even though their names sounded like it; Joanne was the older by several years. Mr. and Mrs. Holland were always good to the young people who went to Bell Memorial Church, there in Otterbein, but those were qualities that I knew nothing about during our time of transition. For then, he was just a man in the community who was pretty good at doing home repairs, and stuff like that.)

A very essential "first," on Mother's list of things to be done, was a new roof! Then, since the tiny kitchen had hardly enough space to turn around in, she had the little back porch enclosed to make a "utility room" for an icebox and a storage cupboard. That "upgrade" added about four feet to the overall length of The Shack. Of course that didn't add anything to the actual "living space" but, even so, Mother decided that the kitchen had enough wall space for a small cupboard. Yes indeed, she was a "planner," and she was determined!

As Mother continued to consider improvements which could make The Shack more livable, one of the times that we were out there on a Saturday she inquired about the availability of electricity. (I was certainly in favor of that! I couldn't imagine being without what I'd always taken for granted as one of life's "fundamental things"!)

She was told that the wiring was only in as far as the church, and that was about a quarter-mile east of our little house. As she inquired further, she found out that it would be "quite expensive" to have the wiring and service extended west to our place. Mother shied away from anything that smacked of "expensive" much as she would have The Plague, so electricity "would be a 'luxury' that we'd do without." (I already knew whose job it would be to clean the chimneys for the kerosene lamps!)

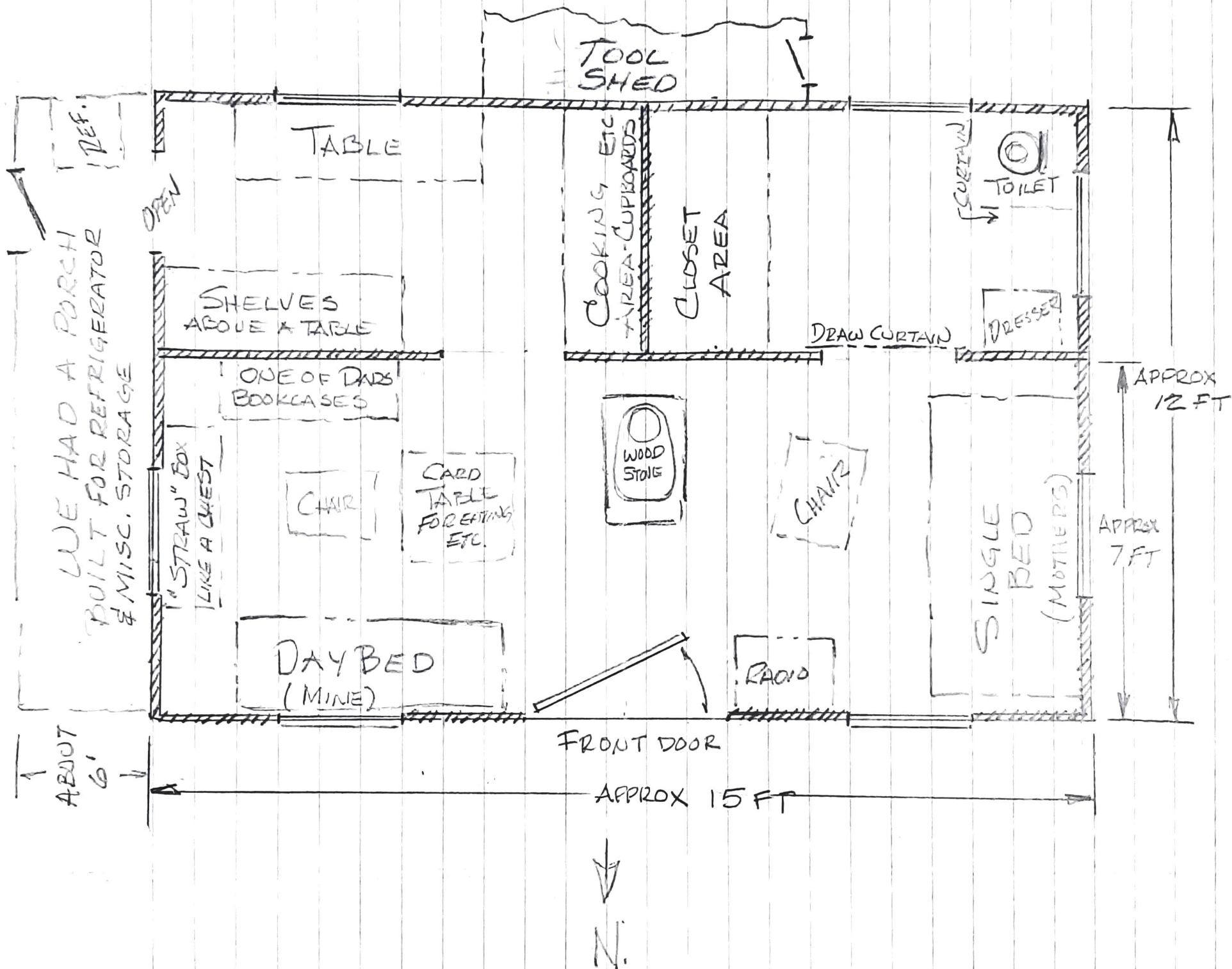
Of course there was no water piped into the house, but there was an outside faucet about ten feet from the back door. Without even inquiring about *how much*? Mother decided that would be adequate.

It hurts me today when I think how easy it would have been to have piped water into the house myself, and spared Mother having to carry it in in buckets. I'm sure I could have done much to make life easier for my mother, but as a teenage kid I just didn't take the initiative to do anything about them.

Selfishly, I was thinking of the changes that were happening, and how strongly I resented them.



WATER FAUCET



## Chapter 13

### Establishing Priorities for Cutting My Ties

Along with all of the other “stresses,” there was still school to keep up with – I wanted to graduate from John Marshall Junior High with my grades as good as possible. I was really “down” when track season was over that spring. It seemed that all of the things special to me were coming to a screeching halt! It was going to be hard to leave all of my friends, and enter a senior high where I knew only a few kids, ones who lived at Otterbein, near The Grove.

I knew the changes that were looming up would necessitate giving up a hobby that had become very important to me – my pigeons, and I put it off for as long as I could. I hung onto my paper routes for a means of income (which I always seemed to have a need for). Then, big on my priority list was my involvement with the Boy Scouts.

These were difficult things to think about, much less to have to act upon!

#### Top Priority: Scouting

Since my twelfth birthday, in October of 1930, Scouting had become a very important part of my life; now I realized it, too, would be concluding.

I had always had the goal of reaching Eagle Scout rank, and had started work on my merit badges even before I reached “First Class.” And now, knowing that time was limited, I worked doubly hard.

Twenty-one merit badges had to be earned: twelve were specified as being “mandatory,” while the other nine could be “selected.” Each required a lot of study and preparation.

A fellow had to have been a “First Class” for a year, and that made me eligible for “Eagle” in the spring of 1934. By then, I had earned all twenty-one merit badges, and I was ready! My boyhood friend, Raymond Kahn, shared the honor with me at the same Court of Honor in May of 1934. That was a proud day in my young life, and I think Dad would have been proud of me, too!

To this day I feel that the Boy Scouts has been a wonderful organization. But like so many “good things,” today Satan is doing all he can to rob it of its value. It hurts me to read of corruption within the leadership, and the relaxing of rules prohibiting homosexuals from membership, etc. The *Scout Oath* states (I *hope* it still does!):

“On my honor I will do my best . . .

1. To do my duty to *God* and my country, and to obey the Scout Law.
  2. To help other people at all times.
  3. To keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and *morally straight*.”
- [Emphasis added.]

#### Priority Number Two: Pigeons

I knew I was going to have to give up my pigeons. I kept trying to figure out ways of taking them to the Grove with me, but I knew that wouldn’t work. I probably had between



twenty-five and thirty birds by then. Many were “veterans” of several races, particularly the Santa Barbara races, and a few had been involved in the big San Francisco race. Each one was a “story in pigeon feathers” to me!

I told Mr. Wilson about my situation; I knew I could always depend on him for wise suggestions regarding my pigeons. He reminded me that I would have to fill out a *Change of Ownership* form for each bird, then file it with the Club. That form would show the registration number (the band number) of the bird, and the name and address of the new owner.

Again, just like when he helped me to get started with raising racing pigeons by promising to give me pairs of his birds’ eggs, Mr. Wilson was true to his word. He helped me find good homes for them. Some of my birds went to members of the Pasadena division of the L. A. Club, and others went to dependable friends of mine who were just then getting started in the hobby. I was able to avoid splitting up any of the pairs, and I was glad of that. And so went a real fun hobby.

It was a good thing that I kept a list of who took what birds, for every now and then, for several weeks, a bird would come back to its familiar loft – out behind *our* garage, just west of the peppertree. It was hard for me to do, but I would call the new owner to come get it. I left the old loft standing until just before we moved – just for that very reason. It’s amazing how a “homing pigeon” instinctively returns to its “home loft.”

In just a short time I found myself wishing I could, too!

### Priority Number Three: Paper Routes

I kept up with my paper routes for as long as I could possibly handle them. As I recall, I gave up the morning route first, but hung onto the *Pasadena Star News* evening route until just before the actual move in September of '34. (I had no idea if I'd have time to find something to do to earn “spending money,” after moving to The Grove.)

It amazes me how difficult it is for me to recall very many details regarding that two-year period – from the time my dad died to when my mother and I moved to The Shack on The Grove. Then, as the summer drew closer, and we'd really be making the move, I feel as if it must have been as though I was closed in – in a fog of some kind, and I literally “draw a blank.”

It seemed that the end of the school year was coming fast. I knew it was Mother's intention to rent the property as soon as possible, after we were ready to move out, so it had to be groomed into rentable condition. She realized there was quite a bit of work to be done, and she decided I could do most of it. So, I did what I could.

Much too soon for me, it was June of 1934, and time for graduation from John Marshall's tenth grade. Traditionally, that's a big event for kids of high school age – just beginning to “go with the girls,” looking forward to parties, and all those kinds of things.

John Marshall Junior High's graduations were really nice, too. It was always an evening affair in the school auditorium, with parents and friends in attendance.

Mother was my “date.” After the ceremony, we drove back home – and that was that. No big deal. My school days with all of my Pasadena “buddies” had come to an end.

## Chapter 14

### Trying to Make Some Sense Out of It All

Now the real work began; the move was imminent. There was much to be done in that summer of 1934, during the months between graduation from John Marshall and when I'd be entering Puente Union High School as a junior (11<sup>th</sup> grader), in September. (I certainly was dreading that!)

As to the details, as I have said over and over again, I draw a blank. I know there was some painting to be done and shrubs to be groomed, there at The Holliston House. I had to periodically check my pigeon loft to be sure none of my now "transplanted birds" had "come back home to roost," I had to give up the last of my two paper routes, and I had to make the rounds to tell all of my friends good-bye.

I tried to keep from being overwhelmed by the thoughts of the future, and the responsibilities it would hold for me. Instinctively, I knew that Mother had reasoned that the success of the orange grove, which I was soon to be in charge of caring for, would be of major importance for our future financial security. Even though I wasn't quite sixteen, I could recognize that I would be facing a challenge!

While I didn't know the Lord then, I can now look back and see His hand in having lead Mother and me through many of the difficult situations that confronted us. I didn't realize the magnitude of the whole thing then, but now, as an adult, I look back on that time with amazement. Just to think of my mother, one who for all of her life had lived in comfort and borderline luxury, being willing to even consider such a venture as we were about to be involved in, was incredible. And yet we did it. How, I still don't know.

### Our "Moving" Experience

On "moving day" in early September of 1934, Jeff Johnson arrived at The Holliston House, driving a stake-bed truck. Mother had arranged for him to move our things into that same little house that Dad had hired him (and his team of big bay horses) to move onto The Grove, at just about the same time of the year, in 1929.

Together, Jeff and I loaded several items until the "not-too-large" truck was full, then off he'd go. Some of the furniture was to be stored (and used) by Mr. and Mrs. Keckley, some people who lived out in Otterbein, so Jeff took those things to their home. He delivered other items to other people. Then, a few days later he'd reappear at The Holliston House for another load. By then he was probably taking our very few larger pieces to The Shack. It must have taken at least three or four trips for him to complete his part of the job. Some of the smaller things, such as kitchen utensils and clothes, Mother and I took in our car.

And then – suddenly there we were, Mother and I. We were moved into our new home – The Shack, on the Grove. No electricity, no indoor running water, the toilet that got flushed with a bucket of water.

*Maybe this is just a bad dream; surely someone will be waking me soon, and I'll find out it's not real!*

But it was real, it didn't "go away in the morning."



Believe me, it took some adjusting – and quickly! We didn't have the luxury of working into it gradually. School was going to be starting in just a few days; that would be just one of many new experiences; not the "new adventures" kind that I would have been excited about, just *new* ones – the *have-to* kind.

I doubt that I realized then, as I do now, that if it was difficult for me, it must have been many times more difficult for my mother, a lady who had enjoyed household conveniences all of her life – until then.

But with her "woman's touch," Mother did her best to make The Shack as comfortable as possible.

Somehow we made it – for four years. Long, difficult years.



THE "SHACK"

SHORTLY AFTER MOVING  
FROM COOPERS (1930)



AFTER A NEW ROOF  
AND PAINTING



CIRCA 1935  
1929 CHEVY





## PART FIVE: THE DIFFICULT YEARS

1934 – 1938

### Chapter 15

#### Home, Bleak Home

And so started the “Otterbein Years,” as I call them: years filled with inconveniences, and the frustrations caused by them. Recalling those four years as the *difficult* years is an understatement!

One of the very first things that came to my attention was the fact that being cooped up in a house that was approximately twelve-by-fifteen feet overall provided no space for “being alone.” No matter the moods, no matter the attitudes, it was “Mother and me.” The *togetherness* was sometimes quite difficult!

#### The Home (?) Tour

The fifteen-feet-long by six-feet-wide main room (a combination sitting room, “two-beds” room, dining room, and study) was across the front of the house. The rear six-feet was divided with a wall which enclosed a little (yes, *little!*) kitchen, which measured about six-by-seven feet, in the southeast corner of the original little building. As I’ve already mentioned, the east end now boasted of the four-foot wide “utility room” which was really the outside porch that had been enclosed. The southwest corner room, which was about the same size as the kitchen, was the combination dressing room, closet, and “bathroom” (no bathtub, shower, or wash basin, just the “flush-with-a-bucket” toilet).

There, that full description of the house didn’t take long!

#### The Amenities (?)

Even though we called it a “*bathroom*,” tub baths had to be negotiated in a galvanized “wash tub” which was stored on a nail on the side of the house, outside the back door. That same tub was also used for “Monday wash day.” For both purposes, the hot water came from a teakettle. And, as I’ve already mentioned, the *cold* water that was heated, in fact, *all* of the water for inside use, had to be carried in a bucket from the faucet that was about ten feet from the back door. (Not exactly the “greatest” for a housewife who’d been used to merely “turning the knob at the sink” all of her life.)

That teakettle was heated on the freestanding wood stove that was positioned in the middle of the “front room,” and that stove was our only source of heat for the entire house. Even though Mother cooked our meals on a two-burner “camp stove” that was on a table in the kitchen, she had to use the wood stove for large pots or skillets that wouldn’t fit on the smaller camp stove burners.

Mother had been very wise in having had Mr. Holland enclose the open back "porch" that stretched across the east end of The Shack. The "back door" from the Shack had opened from the little kitchen onto that open porch. As a part of the remodeling, that door was removed from the kitchen wall, and used for a new *outside* doorway from the "utility room." The opening from the kitchen into the utility room was then just an open passageway that furnished access into the new utility room. That new room provided the only space Mother had for doing the laundry, even though the initial concern had been for making a place to keep the icebox.

(I should take a moment to describe that icebox. It was a floor-standing affair, made of wood. Across the top was a compartment that held a 50-pound block of ice, and fortunately that was delivered by the "ice man." The cupboards below were for the perishable foods. A drainpipe went from the ice compartment, down through the back of the cupboard section, and into a hole in the bottom. There was enough clearance to slide a "drip pan" between the floor and the bottom of the icebox. Heaven help the guy that forgot to empty that pan full of melted ice water! Otherwise, instant flood! And that really did happen – more often than I care to think about!)

I honestly don't know how Mother managed!

I've mentioned that the galvanized tub, that was stored on a nail just outside the back door, was used for both bathing and laundry. Well, she'd had Mr. Holland build a "shelf" across the entire north end of the "utility porch," and it was about three feet wide, and probably about two-and-a-half feet above the floor. That was her "work bench." She'd put the "wash tub" on that bench, use hot water that had been heated in the teakettle on the wood stove that was in the "front room," then proceed to scrub the dirty clothes on her wash board. There were some clotheslines strung between a couple of T-shape posts, out behind the little house, and that was where she hung the laundry to dry.

Mother had taken her ironing board to The Shack from Pasadena. It was kept folded and stored in the "dressing and bath" room. I really don't remember where she set it up when the laundry was dry, dampened, and ready for ironing – probably in the "front room"; there just wouldn't have been space for it anywhere else. Even though she'd also taken along her electric iron – for "someday, maybe," she had to manage by heating flatirons on the wood-burning stove which was a permanent fixture there in the "front room."

It shames me to admit that I probably rarely showed gratitude for all that she was doing to make life as good as she possibly could. In fact, I probably just took it all for granted since she usually did those "homemaking chores" while I was either at school, working, or anyplace else that I could "need" to be. It's vivid in my memories how I tried to *need* to be busy "elsewhere" as much as I could, because of the "togetherness" which was contentious for both of us when we were indoors at home, at the same time.

I've mentioned the variety of uses for the wood-burning stove: heating the teakettle, accommodating large pots and skillets, heating the little house, . . . Well, cutting firewood for that thing seemed like a never-ending job – especially during the winter months, since the walls of the house were not insulated.

The "camp stove" which Mother used in the kitchen was fueled with "white" gasoline, the same as today's "unleaded" gasoline. And, by the way, that fuel was not available at "just any" service station; instead, when the supply was running low we had to drive into Puente to buy it at the hardware store that stocked it.

Of course, we'd usually take advantage of "being in town" by using it as an opportunity to buy some groceries. There were no stores "just around the corner," nor could Mother phone Sterling's Market and have her groceries delivered to the house – at no extra charge! – as she'd done when we lived at The Holliston House. Out at The Grove, the closest stores of any kind were in Puente, five miles west, and Pomona, about ten miles east of Otterbein. And, believe me, the grocery stores were not comparable to today's "super markets"!

I've digressed from describing The Shack's "amenities," so, now, back to that subject:



As I've already mentioned about the "passageway" from the kitchen into the utility room, the little house had *no* inside doors, just "openings" where doors should have been. The rooms weren't large enough to allow ample wall space for doors to swing on hinges. Mother did rig up "privacy curtains" on ceiling-mounted rods over the toilet, and they could be pulled for a makeshift enclosure. Another rod was across the top of the doorway from the "front room" into the "bathroom." A curtain made of some kind of heavy fabric was hung from it, and could be pulled for privacy when we were bathing and dressing.

A card table was kept folded, and it was stored out of the way against the east wall – there wasn't much "open space" in that linoleum-"carpeted" room. We'd set up that table when it was time to eat, or for me to use when doing my homework – with the light from a kerosene lamp.

Ah, yes, the kerosene lamps . . . cleaning the chimneys, trimming the wicks, and filling the bowls with kerosene was my job. The light from those lamps was both dim and flickering – less than ideal for reading, doing homework, or for lighting the little kitchen or "front room." (I don't recommend them for anyone or anything, not even for "country charm.")

Another departure from "city life" was no telephone! Mother had decided that was an item (and expense) that we could do without, so we did. If anyone needed to get in touch with us, they either had to drive to our house – or forget it. If we just *had* to make a phone call, the Coopers were kind enough to let us use theirs. (Coopers were the people Dad had bought The Shack from, and they lived about a quarter-mile east of us, cattycornered from the church.) Being without a phone was "different," to say the least; almost "total isolation."

I was glad that Mother had decided to keep our very nice cabinet radio, and had had Jeff Johnson take it to The Grove instead of storing it with someone. To me that, along with the electric iron, were indications that *maybe* she hadn't completely given up the idea of "electricity someday." It really crowded everything to make room for the radio in that small "front room"; nevertheless, it was in there!

I had taken along the little battery-powered radio that I'd made from the bits and pieces from that old radio that Dad had bought for me to salvage parts from, so long ago. It didn't play through a speaker, so the listener had to use earphones. (I can remember Mother listening to her favorite programs in the evenings, and sometimes she would fall asleep with the earphones on.) That was our only source of "hilarity and entertainment" – one person at a time.

There was another very special item that my mother had decided to keep – one of Dad's *Globe-Warneke* bookcases. It did seem strange to see only *one* of the units, though, since the walls of his study at The Holliston House had been lined with them, and filled to the hilt with his hundreds of books. Mother didn't intend to use that one bookcase for books, but as sort of a "hutch."

Mother's single-wide bed was along the west wall of the "front room"; I slept on a narrow "day bed" which, was just left of the front door as you'd enter the room – along the north wall. A couple of small wooden rocking chairs and a wicker storage chest completed the furnishings in our "bed-dining-den-living room."

The lack of total privacy must have been as embarrassing for Mother as it was for me, a teenage boy. As I think back now, I'm amazed that we made it through a *week*, let alone *four years*. It wasn't the "fun" that it had been when I'd occasionally get to go out to The Grove with Dad, for an overnight stay in The Shack.

## Chapter 16

### Getting Off to a Reluctant Start

Not only had I graduated from junior high, but somewhere along the line I had also “graduated” from my childhood name of *Bobby*. Maybe since I was expected to assume the role of “keeper of The Grove,” Mother had decided I deserved the grown-up name, Bob. (That was *one* improvement.)

#### School Days (Again) – for *Bob*

We’d hardly gotten moved into The Shack before it was time to start to school, and I was really dreading that. Puente Union High School was small, when compared to the Pasadena schools that I’d attended. I don’t think there were more than two hundred kids in the entire four-year school.

The farming community was very stable, so it was next-to-impossible for a new guy to be inconspicuous. Too, since I was entering as a junior, that made it doubly difficult because most of the kids had been in school together since their first day of kindergarten. Cliques had been formed, friendships were solid. And there I was. “Who are *you*? Where did *you* come from?” But since it was a comparatively small school, it didn’t take too long to get acquainted.

In addition to the usual academics (math, science, social studies, languages, etc.), I really liked woodshop and auto shop. What I learned in those classes proved to be practical in my adult years -- I’ve always enjoyed doing basic maintenance on my own cars, and tackling some cabinetmaking projects in our homes has been very gratifying. In fact, I’ve always like “projects” of various types.

I was especially anxious to check out their track activities, and became *hopeful*. Coach McMillan seemed like a great guy, too. But being involved in after school sports was out of the question for *two* reasons, instead of just the one obstacle that I’d had in Pasadena – my paper route. Since we lived more than five miles from the school, I had to ride the bus and it always left just a few minutes after school was out for the day, so that meant that I couldn’t hang around for anything. And now I had the even more pressing obligation that took most of my late afternoons and evenings, as long as it was “daylight” – maintaining the grove. There was always something needing to be done. I really wished I could have a shot at pole vaulting again! *Maybe sometime, somehow*, I hoped.

Having to ride on the school bus was good in a way – it gave me a chance to talk and laugh with the new friends I was making, and I was glad for *any* good times that came along.

#### Sixteen – At Last!

This will be a brief part in my autobiography but, believe me, the dawning of my sixteenth birthday was a H-U-G-E “chapter” in my life! Oh, not because of a party – I’d never had one, so that wasn’t why this was a long-awaited birthday. Being sixteen meant that I’d finally be rid of that *Valid Only When Accompanied By Mother* notation on the backside of my



driver's license! Hooray! Free at last! Well, not really *free*, since Mother was the "keeper of the keys," but I was hoping that once in a while I'd get to use the car WITHOUT MOTHER!

Even though *Otterbein* was our "home address" from the first part of September 1934, my mother continued to need me to drive her back to Pasadena from time to time. There was business to take care of which pertained to our former homes, now her "rental properties." Then, while we were in town she'd occasionally want to stop in for a visit with her Cousin Emma Rinehart.

Well, *I* knew of another stop we'd be making when we would be in Pasadena as soon as it would be necessary – following October 15, 1934. I didn't even stop to wonder if *Mother* remembered that we'd be going to the DMV office when that day came; I knew *I* hadn't forgotten! And, after all, *I* was the driver! Just like I had been ever since I'd gotten that provisional license when I was thirteen.

I was one happy guy when that bit of business was transacted, and I had my first "legitimate" driver's license! Again, I didn't stop to wonder how Mother was feeling about it.

### Bell Memorial Church

Soon after moving to Otterbein, Mother and I began attending the little church down east on the corner, Bell Memorial. I've mentioned earlier that its name honored Bishop Bell, an early leader in the Evangelical United Brethren (EUB) denomination, and an early resident of Baker Home, the retirement community in which the church was located. Even the *Otterbein* name was derived from the denomination's college that was in Ohio. Bishop Bell had passed away before we moved to The Grove, but his highly respected widow still resided there, as I've already mentioned.

Mother was pleased that Bell Memorial Church was the community's spiritual stronghold. I was more than pleased to find out that it was also the hub of social activities for the young people who lived in the neighborhood. Not only people from Baker Home and Otterbein, but there were families from neighboring communities who drove there for worship and fellowship. It wasn't long before that little country church became very important to me – a bright spot in my clouded world.

I found that several of the kids that I'd already gotten acquainted with while riding the school bus to Puente High were attending there, and it didn't take me long to make friends with the older ones, ones who were already in college, or were working full-time somewhere. Age differences didn't seem to matter, they just all enjoyed being together.

It was the untiring efforts of one lady who inspired and encouraged the young people. She was Miss Florence Ratliff, the principal and a teacher at Hudson Grammar School, in Puente. She was an unmarried lady, and she lived with, and sort of took care of, her elderly aunt and uncle, over on San Jose Street, just a ways northwest of the church. Young people were her "mission in life"; she literally *loved* being involved with them. She was truly an inspiration!

It was because of Florence's influence that the young people in that little church had one of the most active Christian Endeavor groups in the entire Pomona Valley area, where Otterbein was located. One of her greatest delights was filling her car with kids from the church, then driving them to Pomona, Los Angeles, or "wherever," for district "sings," conferences, or "whatever." This was just what I needed, and I really "ate it up."

Johnny Holmes, a single young man who was several years younger than Florence, and several years older than most of us kids, usually drove her car for her. They made quite a team. Some of the other older fellows would take the "overflow crowd" in their cars. All of the parents seemed to go along with letting their kids be involved in the various activities – as long as they knew Florence and Johnny were going to be "in charge." There was never any romantic interest



between them, they were just each dedicated to keeping all of us kids "in line," and keeping us active in the church affairs.

(Just a parenthetical note – to relate more about Florence and Johnny: He eventually married Alice Cooper, the daughter of the people who let Mother and me use their telephone when we needed to; the same people who had originally owned The Shack that my dad had bought – so many years before.)

(Florence never married. After her aunt and uncle passed away, she bought a little home in Puente so she'd be closer to Hudson Grammar School, but she continued to drive to Otterbein to Bell Memorial Church for as long as she lived. She was truly a dedicated woman.)

Reverend Edward McCorkle was the pastor of the church. He and his wife, Harriet, were the parents of June Harriet, one of the teenagers of the gang. (In later years, June married John Lohrenz, a young man whom she met in Selma, California, after her dad had been transferred to become the pastor of the Evangelical United Brethren Church in that San Joaquin Valley town. June and John Lohrenz became life-long friends of ours.)

Mrs. Grace Hollingsworth was the choir director, and she was gracious enough to encourage most all of us "young people" to take part in the music program of the church. That meant a lot to me, since I had just begun to develop a real love for music and singing. (I guess I'd never slowed down enough during my younger years to "make room" for things like that – I was too busy training my racing pigeons and delivering newspapers!)

Grace (everyone called her by her first name, even though she was an "old" lady – probably in her fifties!) and Mr. Hollingsworth, Will, who worked for the *Pomona Valley Journal*, the local newspaper, lived on Tranbarger Street. That street was named for another of the families who were very prominent in the community – he was the mail carrier on that rural route for years. Meredith and Beatrice were their daughters, and Paul was their young son.

Since the McCorkles had purchased their own home on Otterbein Avenue, about half-a-mile south of the church, the parsonage, which was a large residence next-door south of the church, was rented to the Elmore family. Their son Merlin was about my age, and we became very close friends. Then there were the Brunsons – they lived just west of the church, on the same side of the street that Mother and I lived on. Sam, Clark, and Olive were their kids. The Garners lived farther east, and their kids were Elaine, Glen, and Avery. (Years later, Sam Brunson and Elaine Garner were married to each other.)

I've already mentioned the Hollands and their kids, Joanne and Jack; they lived on Otterbein Avenue, a little farther south than the McCorkles. Esther Shaeffer and her mother lived near the Hollands; and Chet and Bob Handly were brothers who lived nearby with their aunt and uncle, the Berrys. The Combs family drove to the church from their home in Walnut, and so did the Blackwills who also lived on a ranch over that way. The Combses had four daughters, Lois, Mary Ellen, Betty, and Eileen. (After we were all older, Chet Handly married Lois Combs, and her sister, Mary Ellen, became Bob Handly's wife.)

Melvin and Leonard were the sons of Jim and Hazel Blackwill. (Leonard never was real gung-ho about attending Christian Endeavor, or the church services, but he was usually around for the fun-stuff! Melvin never missed anything!) Barbara Hostetler lived over west a few miles, and her folks always brought her to the church, even though they never attended any of the services. (When they were older, Melvin Blackwill married Barbara Hostetler.)

Even though the Moore family lived a little distance away – on Valley Boulevard, about a mile east of Puente, they attended anything and everything at the church. Their kids were Billy, Lilly, Harold, and Helen. Then, Berthabelle Derhammer lived east of the church. Her dad was caretaker at the Fairview Elementary School, so their house was on the school property.

I know I'm forgetting a lot of the names, but it was really great to be feeling a part of a "gang" again. It's also very nostalgic to ponder ways in which so many of those young people were involved in my years of living in Otterbein, and many of them have continued to be close friends through these many years since.



They weren't the same as the "Old Gang" in Pasadena, of course, but there wasn't much of anything that *was* the same as those days at The Holliston House. I was growing older, and life was becoming more complex.

But I've been forever thankful for Bell Memorial Church!

## Chapter 17

### Taking the “City” Out of the Boy

*Well, Grove, here I am. Where do I start? What do I do first?* When I had gone out to The Grove with Dad, my part of the “work” was mainly to just stay out of his way, go find James Shumard, and see what fun we could cook up. Or, if some of the guys from our neighborhood in Pasadena had gone along, I didn’t even have to take the time to find out if James was home that day. We kids would just “spill out of the car,” and find “instant fun.”

But now it was different! I’d known for almost two years that when Mother and I moved to Otterbein I would be responsible for the care of The Grove. That was going to be quite an assignment for a “city boy” who wasn’t quite sixteen years old (at the time of our move). Since my folks had never intended to be out at The Grove on a regular basis, my dad had hired Jeff Johnson to do most of the work. But, once Mother and I had moved out there, the care of our grove was up to me.

Jeff was quite a guy! He and his wife, Ruth, raised chickens on their property, but selling the eggs and poultry didn’t provide enough income to meet their needs, so Jeff earned most of his money by working on other people’s groves, and doing all sorts of odd jobs in the community. I really don’t know how Jeff did so much really *good* work – since he didn’t have citrus acreage of his own, he didn’t even own a tractor – just his team of horses. It took a lot of skill to maneuver those harnessed horses around in a grove, while doing disking and harrowing!

As I’ve mentioned earlier, The Grove was 5.6 acres in size, and had about 300 Navel orange trees, and approximately 100 Valencia trees. I would be learning that the Navels, the seedless variety, were ready for picking from November to around February or March, for “winter market”; the Valencia oranges, the ones *with* seeds, were “summer fruit,” with May and June the picking season for them. I knew that since my parents were members – well, now it was just Mother, of course – of the local Citrus Growers Association, the picking would be done by their crews, seasonally, along with the transporting and packing of the fruit, and the eventual marketing of it.

I knew the trees had to be irrigated during the summer months; because of the extremely hard soil, a mustard “cover crop” had to be sown in the fall; the grove had to be smudged if the weather dipped to freezing temperatures during the winter; and the “cover crop” had to be disked under in the spring.

I knew *about* those things, not *how*; I’d *overheard* Dad talking with some of the resident growers about the work that had to be done.

There was my clue: *Talk with someone who really knows all about being a citrus grower.* Jeff Johnson was almost always busy with his “paying jobs,” and lived a little distance from our place, so . . . *Mr. Keckley, here I come!*

The driveway into the Keckleys’ property was probably a couple of hundred yards south of the church, off of Otterbein Avenue. Their house couldn’t be seen from the road, but set back to the west, on a little hill. In addition to their home, they had a big barn, and a shed that was large enough that they let us park our old Hudson in it. (There was no room for any kind of a garage for the car at The Grove.)

Mr. and Mrs. Keckley had always been friendly with my folks and me. Once in a while, when the three of us would have driven out to The Grove from Pasadena, we’d stop in for a “nice



little visit” with the Keckleys. In fact, Mr. Keckley had been one of the men who had highly recommended “that particular piece of orange property” to my dad, and was in one or two of the pictures of the young grove that were sent to my folks while we were still living in Ohio.

Instinctively, I knew that I could depend on Mr. Keckley and he didn’t disappoint me. One thing that I especially like was that he always treated me like “another man” and that made me feel good.

Since I had never even *driven* a tractor, he knew that learning to drive one pulling an implement (disk, harrow, etc.) was going to be real tricky! Mr. Keckley spent hours in coaching me. He started out by having me ride on the hitch while *he* was doing tractor work on *his* grove.

Then, after I’d bumped along and observed for a while, he’d get off the tractor and have me drive. Mr. Keckley would watch me, then he’d tell me what I was doing wrong. He would also encourage me with compliments when I was doing something right. It didn’t take long to realize that I could easily get into predicaments that were very difficult to get out of, and I soon learned that to do it right wasn’t as easy as it looked.

It took a while to “learn the ropes,” but Mr. Keckley was always patient with this “city kid.” He took time to show me how to prune the trees, and how to cut out the dead wood and sucker growth that would develop back in under the green foliage. (That was a never-ending job!) Later on, after I’d become pretty good at pruning and clearing out the dead branches, Mr. Keckley would even *hire* me to help him with his trees. Without ever talking about it, he seemed to understand our circumstances, and realized that I could probably use some “pocket money.” (How right he was! I was really missing the “paper route” money I used to have to call my own.)

After I was a little older, and had learned a lot in the auto shop classes at Puente High, from time to time Mr. Keckley would let me lend a hand with some repairs that he needed to have done. I can especially remember one time that made me feel really grown up and important: One of his tractors, or some big, heavy implement, needed something fixed, and Mr. Keckley stood back with his hands on his hips, looked the situation over, then turned to me and said, “Bob, do you think we’re ‘stout enough’ to tackle this one?” We were, and we did! I guess it’s stuff like that that boys like to hear, and then remember.

Since we didn’t have a tractor, or a team of horses, wagons, or plows, we could always rent that equipment from Mr. Keckley. If his implements were in use, I could get them from Mr. Ziegler, whose citrus property was a little farther south, or from Mr. Crawford whose place was out farther east than the Fairview Elementary School. Of course, it was Mother who signed the checks to pay for renting the implements, paying for the irrigation water, and for the crude oil for smudging, but she eventually had enough confidence in me to let me make the decisions about when those various things were needed.

Jeff Johnson was always very helpful with making suggestions or answering my questions, when he wasn’t off working somewhere. (Jeff was a good “fiddle player,” too, and I was really getting interested in music!)

All of the men I’ve named, and others, too, taught me so many things about taking care of The Grove, so it wasn’t very long before I had developed quite a bit of self-confidence. I’m sure Mother was glad of that, but she wasn’t one to let me know how she felt about it. She probably just thought I realized that it was my responsibility, and that was why we’d moved to The Grove, leaving “city life” behind.

There was another very significant thing about the new “adult” friends I was making there in the Otterbein community. Every once in a while, one or the other of them would say, “So you’re Dr. Honline’s son, huh? Well, I remember hearing your dad speak – several years ago.” That always gave me a sense of pride regarding my dad.

Yes, I could see that my work was cut out for me! It sure kept me busy – going to school, working in The Grove, driving Mother for errands (and chopping wood, of course!), but I eventually started to feel like I was “getting a handle on it all,” and began to enjoy being a “country boy.”



## Chapter 18

### Citrus Growing: A Year-Round Job

If it hadn't been for Mr. Keckley, and the other long-time citrus growers in our community of Otterbein, I would never have made it! I soon found out that tending an orange grove is a year-round job, and enjoying a glass of orange juice is preceded by a lot of hard work.

It was fortunate for me that Mother and I had moved out to The Grove in the late summer. The work to be done in the early fall was really the easiest, and required less "skill" than during the other seasons of the year, so it was a good time for me to start learning.

*Smudging* is the dreaded wintertime task – if the temperatures dip too low, and getting the smudge pots ready for that job was both heavy and dirty work.

In the springtime the pots had to be put away, and the soil prepared for summer.

*Irrigating* a grove is repetitive work during the summertime, and quite complicated – until you get the hang of it. I don't remember having been involved in that at all until the next summer, so before Mother and I had moved out there, Jeff Johnson had probably finished up the irrigating of our grove for that season.

Since it was then "early fall," Mr. Keckley "invited" me to a *seed sowing session*, over at his grove. *A what?* "Bob, it's time for you to learn about mustard *cover crops*." He taught me the "how-to's" by having me "help" him. He sure didn't pay me anything during the "learning curve," like he did later on, but what I learned from him, and the other citrus growers around, was more valuable than *money*.

#### Fall: Getting Ready for Winter

Sowing the mustard seed was about the first thing to get done early in the fall, after the last irrigation. It sounded pretty silly to me. Why waste the time and money to plant a crop of wild mustard if it was just going to be disked into the ground in the springtime? Well, when it came time to prepare the soil for irrigating the following summer, I found out in a hurry!

The soil throughout that part of the vast Pomona Valley of Southern California was nothing but "gumbo." The more of it that you had to slosh through when it was wet from irrigation water, the bigger your shovel and rubber boots got! But I didn't learn that practical aspect of the operation until the following summer. So . . .

When I got to Mr. Keckley's place, early on the designated Saturday morning, he already had his Model T Ford truck ready to go. It was a flat-bed truck that he could make it into a "stake-bed" by putting the posts into the holes all around the edges, but for this job it needed to be open. He had put a bin-like container on the truck bed, then emptied a gunnysack-full of mustard seed into the container, and piled on extra unopened sacks of seed beside the bin. Mr. Keckley explained that my job was to ride on the back of the truck, scoop up a handful of the seed, and be ready to scatter it all across the driving lane behind the moving truck – while he drove slowly between the rows of orange trees.

He would turn and look over his shoulder every once in a while – to see how I was doing. I decided that being an orange grower was going to be a breeze! Nothing to it! When the bin on the truck was emptied, we'd dump in another sack full. It probably took most of the day to sow



the cover-crop seed throughout his ten- or so- acre grove. He seemed satisfied that I'd done a good job, then he told me to "be ready to go to work *early* next Saturday morning." (*Now what, I wondered!*) "I bought enough seed to do your place, too, so we'll get it done next Saturday."

With school "getting in the way," I could only do a whole day's work on Saturdays. Then, of course, every Sunday was "church day." (I always looked forward to that because of getting to be with the kids, and singing in the choir.)

When "next Saturday" rolled around, so did Mr. Keckley and his Model T. Bright and early! (Biking my pigeons over to Mr. Wilson's on a big race day had made getting up early on Saturdays more worthwhile than this stuff!) Together we sowed the seed for the mustard cover-crop in our grove, but one good thing was that since our grove was smaller than his, we were finished with it in three or four hours.

I knew the mustard had to grow, and that would take a while. I knew it wasn't going to have to be disked under until the next spring. That was great! Nothing to do but go squirrel hunting in the hills down south of Otterbein, or play horseshoes at Ed Hostetler's house. (The Ed Hostetlers were Barbara's aunt and uncle; their orange grove was just a ways south of ours, and pretty well surrounded their home that was on the east side of Nogales Street. Ed had cleared some ground on the north side of their house, and had turned it into a great area for pitching horseshoes. It seemed that no matter when you'd wander over there, there were some men and boys congregated, having a good time.)

But Mr. Keckley soon shot down those ideas of "total freedom" – for the next several months: "Bob, you're going to have to begin working on those 'pots' – winter is going to be here before we know it! You get yourself over to my place *early next* Saturday morning; you help me with mine for a while, then you'll know how to take care of that work in your grove."

I was learning fast that Mr. Keckley was serious about teaching me things that I wasn't learning in school! Such as: smudge pots, and their importance!

From working along with Mr. Keckley, I learned that in the late fall the smudge pots had to be brought out from under the orange trees – where they had been "stored" since early in the spring. The pots had to be filled with crude oil in preparation for the winter.

The smudge pots were used as sources of heat for the trees. When the winter night temperature would dip to 27-degrees, orange growers had to start "firing"; for lemons, 32-degrees was the minimum "low" before having to begin smudging.

There'll be more about all of that later, but in the meantime, the pots had to be made ready for use. All of the time the citrus grower was working on them, he was hoping he wouldn't need to "fire" that winter. Getting the pots ready for filling was the easy part; I soon learned that the actual smudging was lots of work!

Since I was going to high school in addition to being "chief handyman" on our grove, just setting out the pots required several after-school afternoons and evenings – for as long as it was daylight. Then, of course, I'd work on our grove on Saturdays, too; and often I'd help Mr. Keckley with whatever he had to do.

It was by helping Mr. Keckley with his that I learned, first of all, the pots had to be pulled out from under the trees and set *between* the trees, but *not in* the driving lanes. That's where they'd remain throughout the winter months. (The furrowed rows that had been used for irrigating during the summer doubled as *driving lanes* when it was time to sow the seed for the mustard cover-crops, then, later, for hauling the smudging oil, etc., so they had to be kept clear.) Our grove of about 400 orange trees required between 200 and 300 pots, I don't remember the exact number. (No matter the *number*, it seemed like a *lot* when it came to maintaining them and using them!)

Newer pots varied in shapes and sizes, and undoubtedly incorporated many improvements that made them easier to light, and probably burn more steadily. I'm sure ours had been purchased when the trees were young, probably around 1920, so they had absolutely none of



the improvements. However, regardless of age, all smudge pots were made of sheet steel, probably about an eighth-inch thick. (They'd been built to last!)

If anyone is out shopping for smudge pots today, they'll find they're round, which means "easier to clean." However, it's highly unlikely that they could even be found, since the EPA has banned their use in almost all locations; wind machines are being used instead.)

Our smudge pots were about 2-feet *square*, and approximately 15-inches high. (Trying to gouge the crud out of the inside corners of those things was no easy task, but I didn't find out about that until the next spring – when it was time to clean them before putting them away. Jeff Johnson had taken care of that when he'd stored them back in under the trees in the springtime, before Mother and I had moved to The Grove in September of that first year. I got "eased into it" gradually.)

Each of our pots held nine gallons of oil, which would burn about five or six hours, depending on how the dampers needed to be set. There was a flanged lid that would snap down over the pot – *if* the thing wasn't bent. If it was, you'd try to pound out the dented places, because it was important to not have any gaps which would let air in.

The air intake was controlled by two dampers that were positioned across from each other on the lid. Each damper was a crescent-shaped opening in the lid, and that area was covered with a disk-like plate, about 6-inches in diameter. There were three holes in those disks, and a "kick"-flange on the outer edge of each of them. "Kick"-flange was exactly what the term implies! When those disks needed to be rotated in order to close off those holes, thereby controlling the air intake, the smudge pot was so hot that in no way could the "smudger" use anything but the edge of the sole of his boot to move that disk-like damper with a hard, fast kick! *Fast* because he had to hurry to the next pot! Keeping a couple hundred, or more, pots burning on a freezing night allowed no time for goofing off.

Much like the "smokestack" on a wood-burning stove, a cylindrical "stack," about six-inches in diameter, and three-feet, or so, in height, was shoved tightly over a crimped flange that rimmed a hole of similar diameter in the center of the lid of the smudge pot. (There were several louver-like, fixed-position "slits" on the stack to ensure better air draw, and I found out later that it was both necessary and difficult to keep soot cleaned out of those passageways!) About the top inch of the stack was also crimped, and a removable "cap," six or eight inches high, fit down tightly over the top of the stack.

By working along with Mr. Keckley, he showed me how to make sure the dampers were clean, then lubricated, so they would rotate as freely as possible. (Back in those days, if I'd ever seen the lid on a can for grated Parmesan cheese, I could have caught on more quickly to the principle of the "workings" of a smudge pot damper. But I doubt if the shaker-top cheese cans had even been "invented" by then! Even now, *they've* been "upgraded" to plastic "snap" lids.)

Getting the pots out from under the trees, freeing up the dampers, positioning the smudge pots so they wouldn't be in the way of using the driving lanes, and laying the lids off onto the ground – stacks and all (so the pots would be ready for filling), was a one-man job. But it was a different story when it came to filling each pot with oil. That was a two-man job, so I would check with Mr. Keckley about when he planned to start filling.

Since Mr. Keckley had all of the necessary equipment (and the necessary patience for teaching this "city kid"), I was more than glad to help him with filling his pots. Then, in turn, he would help me with ours. Of course, because of my limited time, Mr. Keckley was always way ahead of me, even though his grove was much larger than ours.

Soon after Dad had bought The Grove, he had had a 5,000-gallon reservoir installed on our property. This reservoir was made of cement, and it was used for storing the smudge oil. Of course it had to be located in an accessible place, so Dad had it put out near the road, in the northeast corner of the property. Smudge oil was a thin-consistency crude oil, and it cost three or four cents a gallon in those days – the mid-to-late '30s.



Always, at the beginning of fall, the grower had to make sure that his oil reservoir was full. Since Mother was a member of the local Citrus Growers Association, as I've mentioned before, she would place the order for our supply of oil through their office. After the order was processed, she would be notified when we should expect the big oil truck to arrive to fill our reservoir. Then, later, the bill would be mailed to her, and she would send the check. (Mother headed up the "business department"; I just had the "fun" of doing the work.)

The pot filling was first completed on Mr. Keckley's grove, then we'd follow somewhat the same procedure on ours. For this job, we'd use his Model-T Ford "oil truck." (His old truck was a vehicle of many uses! It was the same one we'd used for sowing the mustard seed.) He had an empty 300-gallon drum-shaped galvanized steel tank stored on a rack that he'd built in his big shed. He'd built that rack so it was just the same height as the flat bed of his truck, so it was fairly easy for the two of us to slide the tank from the rack and over onto the truck. Of course we'd strap it down good, so it would take the jostling of the truck as it bumped along in the furrow-rutted driving lanes – between the trees.

Filling the 300-gallon tank was a breeze at Mr. Keckley's place since he had a gasoline-powered pump to pump the oil from his reservoir. At our place it was a man-powered operation! A centrifuge pump with a long swing handle was used to pump the oil up out of the reservoir and into the tank on the truck – through a three-inch diameter hose. The hose from the pump that dropped down into the reservoir would occasionally get clogged, even though it had a screen over it, and we would have to stop and clean it out before we could resume the pumping.

Once the tank on the truck was filled, the hose from the pump would be removed, the lid put on to prevent oil from sloshing out, and off we'd go! Mr. Keckley drove the truck, and I would "man" the two-inch hose that was used to fill the pots. That hose was attached to the lower spigot on the tank, and it had a nozzle to turn on – and off – the gravity flow of the oil as it drained from the tank and into each pot.

When the tank was empty, we'd return to the reservoir, repeat hand-pumping the oil until the tank was full again, then Mr. Keckley would drive his ever-faithful Model-T back to where we'd left off, and we'd continue on down the rows until all of the pots were filled.

After each pot was filled, its lid would be securely snapped on, being sure the stack cap was in place – to keep the oil as dirt-free as possible. There it would stay – awaiting the time that the winter weather might dip low enough to require its use for smudging.

If we were working on a Saturday, we could usually finish filling the pots in our grove in the one day; if it was just in the afternoon, after I was home from school, it required several evenings of working until it was almost dark.

Supper and homework would be by lamplight, for sure!

### **Winter: Smudging Season**

At eight o'clock in the evening, during the winter months, every citrus grower in Southern California had his radio tuned to KFI so he could hear Floyd Young's *Frost Warning* report. Mr. Young was a meteorologist with the National Weather Service. The Southern California branch was headquartered in Pomona, and the broadcasts emanated from there. Boy, we kept a supply of fresh radio batteries on hand for our little one-tuber so we wouldn't miss that broadcast!

On Sunday nights someone would get up and leave the church service in time to go to his nearby home to listen to the report, then return. If "firing time" was imminent, he would signal the preacher so he could make his report immediately; otherwise, after the service the various citrus growers would gather around that man so they could hear the details of the broadcast they'd missed because of being in Sunday evening church.



Floyd Young named every town and community where citrus was grown, from Ventura, Simi Valley, etc., to the north, all the way south to Fallbrook, Escondido, and El Cajon. Our ears always listened for his mention of *Otterbein*. He reported the predicted low temperature for each area, and the time it was expected to dip to that mark. As I've previously mentioned, smudging for oranges had to start when the temperature dropped to 27-degrees, and for lemons it was 32-degrees.

The southwest corner of our grove, the farthest from the house, was the coldest spot in the grove. It was only by a degree or two, but that was enough to mean that was where I'd have to start firing. (Today, that corner is where the on ramp for Nogales Street angles off to the north from the westbound 60 Freeway.)

Even though the pots were filled with oil, and waiting to be used, there was another important item that also needed to be ready – the torch. Overall, it was probably around three feet long, but just the base part was a container about six inches in diameter and twelve inches high. It held a gallon or two of gasoline, and was filled through an opening near the top that was covered with a screw-on cap. The top of the container was tapered so it funneled into a spout about a couple feet long. That spout was slightly curved at the end, for better access into the smudge pot. A wick, made of some rope-like material, was wadded into the end of the spout, and it burned the gasoline.

A carrying handle was attached to the container portion of the torch, and a small vent tube made of quarter-inch copper ran down the inside of the handle to protect it from mashing or accidentally becoming plugged up. If that were to happen, the torch could blow up. (During smudging season it wasn't uncommon to hear, or read, of a serious injury, or even a death, that had been caused by an exploding torch.) That little tube entered near the top of the can and acted as an air vent, and the user always made sure that it was open and free of dirt.

To start firing, the two dampers on the pot had to be turned so all three holes in each damper would be open, and the cap on the stack had to be removed and placed on the ground near the pot. When the wick of the torch was lighted, burning gasoline was poured from the torch, through the open damper, onto the oil in the pot. Because the oil was cold from the prevailing temperature, sometimes it would be hard to get it to start burning. In that case, the cover had to be taken off the pot so the burning gasoline could be poured directly onto the entire surface of the cold oil. The next pot in the lineup would be lit before going back to replace the cover on the "problem pot," which by then *should* be burning.

Problems like that would add to the frustration when I knew the temperature was rapidly dropping, and it was imperative to get all of the pots burning as quickly as possible.

After all of the pots were burning, I would check the thermometers – we had five. They were mounted on two-by-four posts, one in each corner of the grove, and one in the center. By swinging the torch in a wide arc, the burning gasoline would produce the flare of light I needed for reading the slim line of mercury and the numbers. Then I would walk down the rows between the pots to close the dampers down from *full open*, as they'd been initially set for lighting the pot, to where there'd be just one or two holes open in each of the two dampers on each pot.

If both dampers were left wide open, after it got going the flame would shoot a couple feet above the top of the stack. That indicated it was getting too much air through the dampers, and that also meant it was wasting precious oil. It was important to conserve all of the oil usage I could, and that's why it was necessary to partially close the dampers after I was sure the pots were burning good.

When everything seemed to be under control for the time being, I'd head to The Shack for some good hot coffee, and warmth from the fire in the wood stove. (After making the coffee and putting more wood in the stove, Mother would have gone back to bed – and to sleep. It's sobering to reflect on those "coffee breaks." Even though Mother regarded coffee as being one step removed from liquid poison of some kind, when the nights were freezing cold, and the smudging was grueling, she would keep a pot of coffee on the wood-burning stove for me. It



seemed a bit inconsistent, but I never asked questions! It sure tasted good, and I really appreciated it.)

How long I stayed inside the little house depended entirely on the temperature. If it had been predicted that freezing temperatures were expected to persist for several hours, I knew that each potful of oil would only burn about six hours at the most, and then it had to be refilled. For such times I would have made arrangements with Mr. Crawford for the use of his mules and a sled that he had. (Even though Mr. Keckley's truck would have been better, it wasn't usually available during the nights of smudging because he would need it for his own work.)

There were times that Mr. Crawford's sled was the *only* way to get the oil into the grove, and that would be when a rain had preceded a freezing night. I've already mentioned how extremely gummy and sticky the soil would get when it was wet (everyone called it *gumbo*), both from rain and from irrigating. Truck wheels would only bog down, spin, and "grow" in diameter from the *gumbo* mud. I was really glad for the sled at those times (but sometimes the mules had a little trouble understanding the meaning of *cooperate!*).

Mr. Crawford had rigged a cradle-like platform with a little tilt to it, and that could be put on the sled. It was just the right size to hold a fairly good-size oil drum that had a spigot high enough to get a bucket in under it. I could fill that drum from the reservoir, then "encourage" the mules in the direction of the pots that were low on oil.

The sled had sheet metal covering the underside, and that allowed it to skid along over the slick, gummy mud. The front six inches, or so, was formed up at about a 45-degree angle so it wouldn't dig into the mud as it was being pulled along. There was a steel structure welded across the front, and it had rings on it for attaching the trace chains of the mules' harness. (I had to be careful when hitching the mules to the sled – if there wasn't enough clearance for "slack," the sled could pull up onto their heels, and that wasn't exactly pleasing to them!)

When I got the contraption out into a row where I needed to start using the oil, I'd fill my bucket from the spigot on the drum, then carry it over to pour into each pot. To transfer the oil from a bucket and into the pot, I'd lift the pot lid with the toe of my boot – just enough to expose an opening that would allow space to pour from the bucket into the pot. If the lid and stack happened to fall off onto the ground, it was like playing a game of "hot potato" to get them put back into place on the pot – since they were the hottest part of the unit. (My gloves were thick and well insulated!) Then, on to the next smudge pot. The mules and I had to return to the reservoir quite often; that drum only held a fraction of what Mr. Keckley's 300-gallon tank held.

If just short periods of smudging were predicted, I didn't usually bother to get the mules and sled. But then, if it *did* last longer than expected, and some refilling became necessary, it was a different story. I had to hand-pump the oil from our reservoir into just a couple of the ten-gallon buckets, then suspend them on the opposite ends of a make-shift yoke that I'd hoist across my shoulders, and *I* did the hauling without the mules. This was indeed a "last resort" measure.

It wasn't a matter of "pleasantly" walking through an open field because the mustard cover crop that had been sown in the fall was about three-feet high by smudging time. It would be frozen from moisture in the air, and it was really cold to slosh through that stuff in order to replenish the oil in each of the pots. The warmth from those burning pots sure felt good, but I couldn't dilly-dally – I had to hurry to the next pot. Keeping them burning was the name of the game!

Sometimes, after just an hour or two of smudging, a good breeze might come up, or a cloud-cover roll in. I'd hurry back to check the thermometers, because that usually meant the temperature *might* rise, and I could begin shutting down soon. (That was always a high hope!) If the thermometer reading *did* indicate that seemed to be happening, I'd make the rounds as fast as I could, and shut down the pots in our grove.

If it was at a time that I'd had the mules and sled, just as soon as I knew I was finished with them I'd empty any leftover oil back into the storage reservoir, then head to Crawfords' with the team. I never had to urge them; instead, I had to keep a tight rein on them so they wouldn't



run – as they would have liked very much to do. (They *did* get away from me once, but only the mules and I ever knew about that episode!)

I drove the mules along the dirt shoulder instead of out on the asphalt surfacing on the road, in order to protect the metal bottom of the sled – and to cut down on the noise! Often Mr. Crawford would see me coming, and he'd be out there to help unharness the team and get everything put away – until the next time.

(The use of the mules and sled was not without compensation: Mother and Mr. Crawford had agreed on an amount, and she always paid him, since I couldn't reciprocate by working for him as I did for Mr. Keckley. Mr. Crawford didn't have citrus acreage; instead, he had chickens, rabbits, and livestock, and did all of his own work.)

I was glad if I'd driven the car to Crawfords' when I went to get the mules and sled – that meant the car was there for me to drive home, instead of having to walk. Maybe I could go to The Shack for a few hours' sleep, and *maybe* be ready to catch the school bus the next morning.

A very important factor that cut down the work to be done before the next night of smudging was that if firing had lasted only an hour or two, the pots didn't have to be cleaned, and they'd still have enough oil in them to at least get the lighting started. (Always hoping!)

Not all of the nights that required smudging would have cold periods exceeding the six hours that a potful of oil would last; in fact, a night that *did* was exceptional. It was always a relief to check the thermometers and find that it appeared they'd fallen to their lowest for just a fraction of that time.

Regardless of how many hours were spent in smudging, when it could be done safely, the grower had to start "shutting down." This was done by going along and kicking the dampers shut – *kicking* because of the pots being so hot; the stacks were *red hot*, literally.

The way I did it was to completely close each of the two dampers on all the pots in a row of trees, then go back over the row and put the caps on the top of each stack, totally cutting off the air supply to the pot. By then they'd had time to cool down some. If the caps were put on too soon, there was a good chance they would blow off. I know that as a fact – I've seen caps blow as high as twenty feet into the air! If that should happen, the pot would re-light itself, and then there'd be a real problem in getting the thing shut off.

I remember one morning in the eerie morning light, after a night of smudging – when the smoke throughout the entire area was so dense that it was impossible to see more than a few feet ahead – I went up to a pot to start shutting it down and there lay a "tramp" huddled in close to its warmth. It really startled me! He had some gunnysacks spread between himself and the cold ground, and he was sound asleep. Even the light of my torch and the noise of my kicking the dampers, and returning after a little while to cap the pot, didn't wake him. When I went by that area later, he was gone. (Those were depression years, and there were a lot of "tramps" – guys who were "down on their luck," and I felt sorry for them. Back in those days they never seemed to do any harm – I suspect it might be different today.)

Now, once again, "Back to the night and day in the life of a citrus grower." After a night of smudging, I was really ready for a few hours of sleep – school often had to be "put on hold." There were many times, after having slept a while, I'd hear the old wind-up alarm clock go off all too soon! Then I'd have to get up and go back out to start getting everything ready for the next night of smudging – often it would turn out to be that very night.

Sometimes, through the smudge smoke which lay thick and low throughout the entire valley, I'd see the headlights of the school bus as it drove east on Walnut Drive without me. (It always stopped at the corner by the church to pick up June McCorkle [Lohrenz, now] and me. At that time, we were the only two high school kids in our immediate area.)

If I could get finished with the work (and get myself cleaned up!) by noon, or so, I'd drive in to school for the rest of the day. But there were many days during smudging season that I didn't make it at all. I wasn't the only one – many of the guys helped their dads on their own



groves, and some worked for other growers. The work *had* to be done, and it paid well – for those who were “working for pay.”

After a night of smudging, or even just a few hours, the pots had to be cleaned and filled – made ready for the next go-around! The soot had to be cleaned from around the dampers and stack, so the pot would light as easily as possible the next time it was used. So, before refilling the pots with oil, they had to be brushed good with a wire brush. Then, I’d check the dampers; if they wouldn’t rotate freely, I’d squirt them with a little oil.

What a job that was! There was no way to stay clean – it must have been worse than the Dust Bowl conditions of the early ‘30s – at least I’m sure the soot stuck harder than dust! With no “real” bathtub or shower, and no running hot water, getting cleaned up was quite a challenge. Oh well, I wasn’t the only one who showed up at school with smudge soot around my nostrils and eyes, even in my hair.

Sooner than I could believe it, it would be evening again, and time for Floyd Young’s *Frost Warning* report. I’d listen intently, hoping the forecast would be, “Tonight’s temperatures will be above freezing – in all locations. Firing will not be required.” (What a dreamer!)

All of this now seems so long ago, but today if I were to drive by a place where roofing was being done, I would purposely slow down to try to get a whiff of the hot tar being used in the process . . . its odor is similar to that of the old-time smudge smoke. I could close my eyes and imagine that again I could see the row upon row of burning smudge pots, and watch the moon as it would slowly disappear behind the blanket of thick, heavy smoke.

It was no fun then, but it left a memory never to be forgotten.

### **Spring: Getting Ready for Summer**

When the winter season had passed, and it was fairly certain that there’d be no more freezes which would necessitate more smudging, the whole operation of late fall would be reversed. As I’ve said before, growing citrus was a year-round job, and in the spring there was a lot to get done before summer – the season for irrigating.

To prepare the ground for irrigating it needed to be cleared so it could be worked between the trees – in both directions. That meant the smudge pots had to be cleaned up so they could be put back under the trees and out of the way. The first step was to remove the unused oil in the pots and store it for use the next winter.

So, again, Mr. Keckley and I shoved the big empty drum-shaped 300-gallon tank from its storage rack in his shed, and onto the flat bed of his faithful Model-T truck.

That old centrifugal pump of ours really came in handy for salvaging the leftover oil. Since it was a portable pump, mounted on a thick board that was about three feet long and sixteen, or so, inches wide, it was easy to move around. By standing on that board with my feet firmly planted on either side of the bolted-down base of the pump, my weight kept it from rocking around when I pulled back and forth on the handle.

For the pot-emptying operation, we could easily lift the pump up onto the bed of the truck – alongside the big oil tank. We usually worked his grove first, so one of us would drive the truck down between the rows of trees, while the other one walked along to remove the lids from the pots and be ready to run a hose down into the leftover oil.

The driver would stop the truck at a location where two smudge pots could be reached with the hose. While the guy on the ground was inserting the hose into one of the pots, the driver got out of the driver’s seat and up onto the bed of the truck so he could do the pumping. The action of the pump transferred the oil from the pot, and on up into the opening on top of the big tank on the truck. After those two pots were emptied, the driver would pull the truck forward to



the next set of two pots. That operation was repeated throughout the grove, until we'd managed to pump all of the unused oil back into the large 300-gallon tank.

After salvaging as much oil as we could, we'd drive back to the reservoir. Then the hose from the spigot that was near the bottom of the tank would be lowered into the 2-by-2-foot opening on the top of the reservoir, the spigot turned open, and the oil would drain back into the reservoir – without any hand-pumping required. Mr. Keckley always kept a big wooden wedge laying on the bed of the truck for one or the other of us to kick under the bottom edge of the tank, on the side opposite from the drain hose. By tilting the tank, we'd coax out every drop of oil that we could – what could be preserved meant a head start on the next season's supply.

When the "pot emptying" in our grove was completed, Mr. Keckley would wave good-bye, then chug on back to his place. I was on my own. *Ugh!* The next step was cleaning and checking over every one of those smudge pots – before they could be put back under the trees for storage.

After a winter of smudging, the accumulated soot *in* and *on* the pots could be thick! If there'd been rain during the season, followed by days of winter sunshine, the crud would be caked on, inside and out! If the buildup in the corners of those old square pots was too thick, I had to gouge them as clean as I could with an old screwdriver, or something. What a messy, dirty job!

Sometimes I had to use old brooms or wire brushes for the *dried-on* stuff, but most of the soot could be knocked loose by tapping around the stack and the louver vents with a stick. Each damper had to be well-cleaned, then lubricated good, before the pot could be stored. Any deformities such as dents or bends in the lids would be straightened as best I could – to ensure snug fitting onto the pots, and to prevent air leaks.

After the smudge pots were as clean as I could get them, the lids and capped stacks would be put back on. The main reason for doing all of this cleanup work in the spring was to have the smudge pots ready for use when they were needed for the next winter. In spite of my best efforts, there was one thing I could count on: no matter how clean they were when I stored them, they'd have a few spiders and webs in them when I pulled them out from under the trees the next fall! The "storing job" wasn't completed until the thermometers were "uprooted," too, posts and all, and stashed back in under the trees until they were needed "next winter."

Then, when the smudge pots, and everything else, were stored under the trees, and out of the way, the mustard cover crop had to be disked down. That stuff flourished in spite of the freezing winter weather! I always remembered how silly it had seemed to me when Mr. Keckley first told me that it had to be planted! But now it would soon be summer, and irrigation time was when I could finally appreciate the advantage of the mulching effect that disked-in cover crop had on our gumbo soil! It helped greatly in breaking it up.

Since I had to do most of my work on Saturdays because of school, I always hoped Mr. Keckley had done his disking during the week – so I could get his tractor and disk to use in our grove. But if I couldn't get his equipment, I could usually get Mr. Ziegler's. (As I've said before, Mr. Crawford didn't have a tractor, just mules, and for this kind of work I got better cooperation from a tractor!) Mr. Keckley had taught me well – I learned that disking-in the cover crop had to be done before I could furrow out for irrigating, and that had to be ready by early summer – irrigation season!

A **disk** is a device with rows of steel disks that resemble over-sized dinner plates. They are set at an angle to the forward travel of the tractor. Each row of disks would be opposite in angle to the row preceding it. In those days, when tractors were smaller and much less powerful than the air-conditioned monsters of today, the overall disk apparatus was about eight feet wide, and had three sets of two rows of disks.

A vertical lever was on the front framework of the disk, and other similar farming equipment. The lever was positioned so it was just behind where the driver of the tractor was seated, and could be activated by his reaching back to grab it with his right hand. By pulling on



that lever, the rows of disks, plowshares, harrowing prongs, or whatever equipment was being used for a certain job, would be raised so the implement would travel on its wheels while it was being pulled on the streets, or when a patch of soil needed to be left as it was. It sure made a racket when a tractor went lumbering down the street while pulling some device behind it, but no one paid any attention to it – in those days it was a very common thing.

It usually took me a full day to disk the grove in both directions; I sometimes did it twice, depending on how well the mustard would have been cut up the first time around. (If the ground wasn't in good shape, it was really rough to make good furrows for irrigating.)

When I was finished with the disking, I'd push on the lever to lift the disks, drive tractor and all back out onto the street, and clatter them back to their owner. (Mother would be writing another check for *that* "rental"!)

The next step in preparing the soil was to harrow it. That usually had to wait until another Saturday, because of school.

A *harrow* is an implement about the same overall size as a disk, but instead of steel disks, it dragged a mass of steel bars, or prongs, each about twelve inches long. The depth they would dig into the ground was adjustable, and the prongs were set close enough together to break up the clods of hardened gumbo that had escaped the disk.

Again, I would criss-cross the grove with the harrow, then shove the lever to lift it onto its wheels, and go rattling down the street to return the tractor and harrow to their owner.

Now, finally I was ready to "furrow out," and get ready to irrigate – summertime irrigation season was fast approaching!

The *furrowing device* was also pulled with a tractor. It had six plowshare-like things that were adjustable for varying depths. The row of plowshares was positioned on a structure about eight to ten feet in length – and just the right width to dig six furrows at the same time, side-by-side, and about two feet apart, making the channels for controlling the direction of the water flow.

I'd make one pass the full length of a tree row, then reach back to give the lever a pull to raise the shares, and make a U-turn around the tree at the end of the row. When I was all set to start back up the next row, I'd reach back and release the lever to lower the shares, then furrow out the full length of that next row. This operation was repeated, row after row, until the furrows were made throughout the grove.

Then it was a matter of pulling the lever to lift the plowshares, and go rumbling down the street to return the tractor and furrowing implement to their owner. But that wasn't the completion of the job!

After "furrowing out," and returning the equipment, there was still the important job of *tying in* the east end of the furrows to the standpipes. The "tying in" consisted of connecting the outlets of the standpipes to the furrows by means of small trenches. This was done with a shovel, and to do it right – *throughout the grove* – could take several hours. It was a job that had to be done carefully in order to prevent any flooding around the standpipes – when the water would be flowing on irrigation day.

There, that was it! Everything was all ready for irrigating, and maybe I'd have a little time to spare. Oh, it wasn't that there was "nothing to do," but there wasn't the urgency with the work – like there had been during the late fall and winter months, and the first part of spring.

Of course, there was always pruning to do! But I also had time to do some pruning for Mr. Keckley, if he needed for me to do it. By this time I'd learned how pretty well, and he would pay me for doing that work for him. I was really glad to get the money. It wasn't much, but it meant that I had a little to call my own.



It always seemed that just as soon as I finished my part of the work in preparation for irrigating, the gophers got started with theirs! I'd have to walk through the grove every once in a while to look for the holes they'd dug in the newly furrowed ground. I'd plug up the holes, tamp the dirt down firmly, then hope the gophers would move on to someone's *walnut* orchard.

Everything had to be ready for irrigating!

### Summer: Irrigating Time

When I had learned about "furrowing," and that it was the last step in preparing for irrigating the grove, I also learned that it wasn't just a simple matter of "furrowing out" between the rows of trees. The precision of the patterns and directions that those furrows had to follow may have been one reason that I always enjoyed irrigating. Yet, there were many frustrations and challenges that made me *not* like it all that well. But it had to be done!

When the trees had been first set out back in the early '20s, or perhaps a little before that, the "lay of the land" had been taken into consideration. To further explain: the slope of our 5.6 acre grove was from east to west, so that dictated the initial planning for the flow of the water for irrigating, and for the pattern of the furrows.

At the "high" end – the *east* end – of each row of orange trees was what was called a **standpipe**, which the dictionary defines as *a high vertical pipe or reservoir that is used to secure a uniform pressure in a water-supply system*.

The standpipes used for our grove were cement cylinders about 15 inches in diameter, and stood about 12 to 15 inches above the ground level. The wall of a standpipe was about one inch thick, and had four holes, about two inches in diameter; there were two on each side, and they were positioned about halfway between the ground line and the top of the cylinder. Movable metal **gates** – small "plates" with bent-out finger-flanges at the top of each one – were over the inside of each hole. Formed metal "guides" allowed those gates to be raised and lowered by pulling *up* under the flange with your fingers, or pushing *down* to close it. The volume of the flow of water was controlled by how much of the hole was covered; that is, if the hole was *wide open* there was a maximum flow of water coming through it.

The full supply of irrigation water traveled through an underground conduit that carried the water to the entire row of standpipes. Then, in the bottom of the standpipe was a valve handle that could be hand-turned to regulate the volume of the flow of water within the standpipe, or completely shut off the water flow from that particular standpipe.

The furrows that had been the last step of soil preparation were not "open-ended." Instead, they had been patterned so the full-length furrows turned to cross over where they met the standpipes. (That was a very good reason for not trying to use the mules to pull the furrowing implement! They could have cared less about how many of those standpipes they'd demolished with their "muleshoes"! Even steering the tractor to avoid hitting them required "good driving skills"! By opening and closing the gates that covered the holes in the standpipes, the water was diverted from one furrow and into another. Of course, *that* was when the citrus grower needed to be right there with his shovel – to dam up, or close off, one furrow, and direct the flowing water into the one next to it.

From the east end of the grove, the water flowed "downhill" (it was just a gradual slope, not at all steep), through the furrows that ran full-length – toward the west end. Ah! That west end had required some fancy furrowing patterns, too! It was a literal *maze* down there! The water that had flowed the full length of the furrows which lay between the rows of orange trees had to be diverted – otherwise I'd have been irrigating (or *flooding*) the walnut orchard which joined our acreage on the west. (And that happened – more times than I care to admit! Especially while I was still trying to get the hang of "irrigation skills"!)



During the initial furrowing, I had stopped each east-west swath several feet inside our property line, just even with the last tree in each of the rows. Then, the final courses of furrowed rows were made to run north and south, to hopefully prevent any run-off of water. There was plenty of fast shovel work to be done when the water reached that west end of the grove!

But I'm getting ahead of myself: I haven't even arranged for the water to be "turned on" for our grove, yet.

It was usually in May when the citrus growers would sign up with Mr. Dellinger, the "water man" for the Otterbein area. He lived about a quarter-mile east of us, on Walnut Drive, and of course I had to *walk* to his place, since we didn't have a phone – and it wasn't worth the hassle of first walking to Mr. Keckley's place to get our car out of his shed.

Mr. Dellinger would set up the sequencing schedule for when the various growers would get their water from the pump station that was located a little farther east from his residence, on Water Street, and north of Walnut Drive, across the railroad tracks. The "insides" of that station were always a big mystery to me – a padlocked gate prevented my finding out what all the pumps and gauges looked like. I do know there was an accurate meter of some kind, though, because that would have been what tallied the *Cubic Feet Used* figure that dictated the *Total Due* entry on the bill Mother received from the Irrigation District office.

Mr. Dellinger mailed a copy of that *Irrigation Water Sequence Schedule* to each grower, and that is the way that everyone knew which day the various growers were scheduled to get their water. This sequence was maintained throughout the irrigating season, and it was important for each grower to know whom he followed because he'd better be ready when his day rolled around. Otherwise, that grower would be responsible for messing up the sequence. Sometimes this would happen out of necessity, in which case Mr. Dellinger should have been notified ahead of time – so steps could be taken to avoid any disruptions.

The day before it was to be our day to "get the water," I walked along the row of standpipes – to make sure all the valves were *open*. Then, I walked the full length of the furrowed rows between the trees – to take care of any "updated gopher damage" with my shovel, and to re-shape any places that loose soil might have plugged an open channel for the water. I knew everything had to be all set to go shortly after daylight the next morning. (It was a good thing irrigating was done in the summer, otherwise my school attendance would have had to suffer!)

Just as the schedule promised, very early on "irrigation day" the water could be heard as it rushed to fill your irrigating system. Then, once again I'd walk along by the standpipes and check to see that there were no problems with the water coming out of the open holes, and starting down into the furrows.

If everything looked all right for the time being, I'd go back to The Shack for a quick breakfast. The *real* work hadn't really started yet! After breakfast I would pull on a pair of knee-high rubber boots, grab a shovel, and go out to start my day of irrigating.

Somewhat reminiscent of when I kept a notebook of records on my racing pigeons, or the "collection day" schedule for my newspaper route, I figured out a way to pencil some notations in a little spiral notebook that I carried in my pocket. I found that it was very helpful to jot down the time when I had diverted the water from one series of furrows to the next one by closing off one or two of the gates that were over the open holes on one side, or the other, of the standpipe, and directed the water to enter the *next* furrow.

It didn't take many trips up and down those long furrowed rows before I'd have a pretty good idea of how many minutes – or hours – it should take the water to reach the west end of the grove. Then, by calculating the entries in my little notebook, I could estimate when I should be down at the other end to shovel the mud to dam up a certain furrow, and open up another one – to divert the water into it.



That's where some really fancy shovel-work had to be done *in a hurry* – unless I felt generous enough to irrigate that walnut grove which lay just beyond! And that got expensive – if I blew it! Oh, it did happen a few times, but I just didn't talk about that!

The furrowing implement that I'd used for the initial preparation was set so the two rows of three furrows each left an in-between space for a "walking path." And that's how I learned to appreciate the advantages of the disked-in mulching effect of the mustard cover crop! Even with the soil being fairly well broken down because of it, by the time the irrigating water had traveled the length of the furrows the gumbo mud was getting thicker and heavier!

Often I wondered just how thick and heavy it *would* have been if the dried stalks of that mustard crop hadn't been chopped into it! Even as it was, my progress was slowed down more than once because of hurriedly taking another step, but finding that one of my boots wasn't coming along with me, resulting in my *foot* being firmly planted into the mud! That wasn't fun, nor was it fun to shove a foot with a soggy sock back down into the boot – after I'd yanked it out of the quagmire! The clay-like soil balled up on the shovel, too, and I'd periodically have to knock it loose. Problems such as those increased as the day progressed, and the soil became more saturated!

Another job as I walked between the furrows, shovel in hand, was to be careful to watch for places where crumbling mud had formed any "earthen dams," causing the water to go where it was never intended to. If I found places such as those, of course I'd stop to tamp the mud back into place, and be sure the water was soaking into the *right* places – as it traveled along. (By then it was probably time to pull another boot out of the mire, and the business-end of the shovel would have doubled in size from the stuck-on mud! Great fun!)

Finally, by late afternoon all of the furrows would have been saturated with water, including the maze of north-south furrows at the low, west end of the grove – the ones which were intended to trap the water so it wouldn't run over onto the walnut grove which lay to the west.

When I was satisfied that everything had been soaked good for that time, I'd walk to Mr. Dellinger's house to tell him that I was finished with the water – until the next time. He would hurry to the pump station, and it seemed that almost by the time I'd walked back home, the water supply to our grove would have been shut off. Tomorrow the next grower on the schedule would be getting *his* supply of the irrigation water. He'd better be ready for it! Mr. Dellinger was very punctual!

That concluded my irrigation process – for *that* time!

In a couple of weeks, after the grove had dried out good, I'd once again get Mr. Keckley's tractor and *disk* – and start all over again. Between rounds of irrigating, the grove had to be disked again – in both directions. That was a fun thing to do since it didn't have to be "neat and tidy," just well broken up.

Then, in another couple of weeks I'd get the tractor and *furrowing implement* again. It was time to get new furrows laid out so the ground would be ready for another round of irrigating. It had to be done about once a month throughout the summer.

So went my summers! And it wouldn't be long before Mr. Keckley would be looking for me so he could announce, "Bob, it's just about time for us to start sowing the mustard crop for *this* fall."

*Already?* Indeed, growing citrus *was* a year-round job! And this "country boy" was fast outgrowing the "city life"!



## Chapter 19

### All Work, No Play? No Way!

As I look back on the first year of living on The Grove, and all of the demands on my time, I honestly don't know how it all dovetailed together. But it did! Furthermore, I wasn't about to be totally tied down by learning *how* to do all of the work, and then *doing* it. Any sixteen-year-old kid finds *some* way to make time for things to enjoy.

### Me 'n My Guitar

Music was always something I really enjoyed, especially the country western music that I'd listen to on my little battery-powered radio. Now that I was living in the country, it probably seemed more relevant, or something. I'd heard Jeff Johnson play his fiddle, and that was really great.

Then, as I got better acquainted with the guys and gals at Puente High School, I found that there were several of them who played guitars. I'd never had a guitar, nor had I even thought much about it before. I do remember that I got a harmonica when I was about ten, and struggled to teach myself to play it. But, for the most part, it had always been the piano at our home, back when Mother played a lot, I mean; and Dad had enjoyed the classical records that he'd played on our Victrola.

It seems odd to me that I can't actually remember just when it was that I got my guitar. I've always thought that it was at a certain time, but as I've tried to "put it together" for my memoirs, I've realized that it wasn't stacking up, date-wise. So, it must have been during that first year that my mother and I lived at The Grove.

Mr. Bantley was the music teacher at the high school, and for some reason he took an interest in helping the kids who wanted to learn more about playing guitar. It wasn't taught as a "class," but he did meet together with them during the lunch hour once in a while.

I'm sure Mother wasn't very excited when she realized that I was wanting a guitar. I didn't have much money, but I began adding up what I did have. I do remember very distinctly that I found a guitar in the Sears, Roebuck and Company catalog, and that the price was \$15.00. I still had a little money left from what I'd earned from my paper routes, while we still lived in Pasadena, and, as I've already mentioned, once in a while Mr. Keckley and some of the other growers paid me for working for them. So I did have some money.

It must have been in one of her weaker moments that Mother let me order the guitar from the catalog. I had scraped together the money and had given it to her – so she could write the check that had to be mailed in with the order.

I thought that day would never come when it was delivered! But it finally did, and I promptly took my new guitar down to the church so I could tune it with the piano that was there. And so I had my first guitar which, by the way, I *still* have! However, it is a bit battered: one side has a cracked area in it – I don't remember how it happened, but I would never part with it! (It isn't the one I play now, but it *is* stashed away in a closet – somewhere.)

I spent about all of my spare time practicing chords, trying to learn how to play it. Soon, a few of us were getting together evenings over at the Moores' place. Lilly Moore played the guitar and sang, then Irv Rockwell would have driven out there so he could play with us, too. Not only did he play guitar, but he also played a banjo, and even a bass fiddle. (The bass belonged to his brother Hank, so he could only bring it once in a while.)

Irv was a year behind me in school, but we got acquainted in the group that Mr. Bantley helped with their guitar playing, and we became good friends. He lived a couple miles, or so, west of Puente, and a little way south of Valley Boulevard. All of that area was called "North Whittier Heights" back in those days, but now it is known as "Hacienda Heights." There's another interesting sideline to be added: Several years later I heard that Lilly and Irv got married, but I hadn't kept in touch with them – so many things had changed for me by then.

Ed Worley was a little older than the rest of us, but he was a part of our group – he played guitar and sang, and sort of kept us somewhat organized. Ed knew music, he could read it well, and he played several instruments. I'm not sure just where he lived – it was around there somewhere, because he worked part-time for Charlie Moore, Lilly's dad.

Once in a while we'd all go over to Jeff and Ruth Johnsons' home, and the house "really shook" when Jeff was doin' his thing with his violin! Those were such good times. And it was only the beginning!

It was 1935, and Roy Rogers and "The Sons of the Pioneers" were rapidly gaining popularity since their start the year before. They had a daily broadcast on KRKD, a Los Angeles radio station, and they were our "role models." We worked hard at learning many of the Bob Nolan numbers – *Tumbling Tumbleweeds*, *Cool Water*, and several others.

Our little group never got famous, but we did have fun!

## Old Friends

It was good to be feeling a part of a group, again. Having had to leave the Pasadena neighborhood, and the friends I'd had since I was just a little kid, was hard, and I really missed them. Every once in a while I'd wonder about Mr. Wilson, and think about the fun I'd had with my pigeons. But I knew I had to "settle-in."

However, I was pleasantly surprised from time-to-time when some of the guys from Pasadena would show up at The Grove on a Saturday, or maybe during summer vacation time, when school wasn't in session.

Roy Lowrey and his brother Gordon would drive out occasionally, and they usually had George Good with them. I was so glad to see them, and it was fun for them, too. Their reason for driving the twenty-plus miles from Pasadena was not just to see me, but, rather, to hunt in the ground squirrel infested hills south of Otterbein. Sometimes, if I wasn't busy, I'd go with them; otherwise, they'd stop by and we'd talk for a while, then they'd go hunting on their own. I had previously introduced them to the man on whose land they would be hunting, and he was always glad for them to help get rid of the pesky squirrels.

When Keith Ramage was older, and his folks would let him use the car, he'd come out, too. Sometimes he would bring some of the other guys along. I liked hearing what was going on in the old neighborhood, and they liked getting to spend some time in the country.

I always seemed to have a lot of work to do, but I also worked hard at making time to spend with all of them. It makes a guy feel good to know he's not been forgotten.



## **Pole Vaulting – Again!**

Without Mother's knowledge, I had gotten back into pole vaulting and running track at Puente High. They guys who weren't going out for a "team sport," such a football, baseball, or basketball, were left pretty much on their own during P.E. class. And, of course, since the "team sports" required a lot of after-school practices, I couldn't be involved in them because of the work I was responsible for on The Grove.

In that predominantly farming community, there were a lot of other guys who had the same problem – having to get home after school because of work of some kind, or another. That meant that during P.E. class time there were several of us who'd head to the field for pole vaulting, running, and other track activities.

So, when the spring of '35 rolled around, I was back into it – in spite of all of Mother's admonitions and ultimatums back in junior high days at John Marshall. Mr. McMillen was the football, basketball, track, baseball – you name it – coach. He was very understanding of why a lot of us had to get on the bus and head for home right after school, so he spent serious time in coaching us during P.E. class time.

I knew that a lot of the track meets with other schools were held on Saturdays, and if I made the team I didn't know just what I'd tell Mother was the reason I had to be away from home on a Saturday, now and then. I decided I'd face that problem when I had to.

Well, I had to start thinking fast! I did make the team! But it worked out all right that year since there were only three or four other schools in the same league as Puente High, which made for a short season. Too, since the track season was always in the spring, that was when the work on The Grove was lighter, so I was able to manage it all without Mother finding out. (I didn't happen to break an arm, like I'd done at John Marshall, and that was to my advantage!)

My pole vaulting techniques were really improving, and I loved it!

## **✓A Very Special Sunday Night at Church**

There was another "special event" that occurred late in the spring of 1935 – one Sunday evening during the Christian Endeavor meeting, at Bell Memorial Church.

As I recall, Christian Endeavor, the young people's meeting, was always at five-thirty, and the regular Sunday evening church service was at seven o'clock.

"Christian Endeavor" was an inter-denominational national organization which differed from Youth for Christ (which had not yet been organized) in that the meetings were held in a church on Sunday evenings, instead of being weeknight meetings with more of an evangelistic emphasis.

Usually it was just the regular church kids who attended, but those Christian Endeavor meetings presented great opportunities for all of us kids to learn lessons in leadership. As I've mentioned earlier, it was Florence Ratliff who encouraged (and *ramrodded*!) each of us to take our turns at various parts of the planning, and actually leading the meetings.

I seem to recall that Melvin Blackwill or Sam Brunson usually led the chorus singing, and June McCorkle accompanied on the piano. They always got the meetings off to a rousing start. Someone would lead in opening prayer, then there were usually some announcements that needed to be made. Any time that June McCorkle or Barbara Hostetler had any part in the evening's program, we could be sure some giggling would break the solemnity. Usually, someone sang a solo as a "special," and there were even times that I was asked to play my guitar and sing.



Then, someone else would lead the “lesson time.” I remember that there was an official Christian endeavor lesson guide manual to be followed, and, of course, there was a strong emphasis on the Bible. I really don’t know if it was very “evangelical”; I’m sure it was, but I probably wasn’t listening very closely. I do know that I liked being involved, as did a lot of other neighborhood kids.

It was ritual for the meetings to conclude with the leader saying, “Now, everyone stand, bow your heads and close your eyes, and repeat the *Mizpah Benediction*.” There were probably very few of us who knew what that referred to, but in unison we’d recite, “The Lord watch between me and thee, while we are absent one from the other” (Genesis 31:49).

Then, after the Christian Endeavor meeting was adjourned, we’d all line up in the C.E. meeting room, and be ready to “march” through the doorway that led into the sanctuary, across the platform, and on into the choir loft. Sunday nights were when the choir was comprised of the young people, and Florence had usually made sure that someone had practiced so he or she could “bring the special music.”

For Sunday night church, Florence played the piano, and “led” the choir of kids – with her strong *alto* voice. Believe me, we were flying blind! Those of us who could sight-read music tried our best to sing parts, but somehow Florence’s voice came through stronger than the others. But that didn’t matter – to us it was “heavenly music.”

Mrs. Grace Hollingsworth was the “official” choir director, as I’ve mentioned earlier, and for Sunday morning church Mrs. Combs, the mother of the four Combs girls, was the pianist. But along with everyone else, they encouraged us kids on Sunday nights.

The congregation was small, the choir was small, and the church building was small. But the fellowship for us kids was “big and wonderful.”

Reverend McCorkle, June’s father and the pastor, delivered the sermons, both morning and evening, and I’m sure all of us kids were thinking he’d never get to the last *Amen* on Sunday nights. Almost always there was something fun planned for after church – at someone’s home. There were probably anywhere from fifteen to twenty kids involved, and the parents were good to all of us. The “after church sings” were simple, but there was always popcorn, watermelon, or something else good to eat. (Of course I could never invite the group to my home – The Shack was just too small.)

Now, back to that one special Sunday evening in the spring of ’35. That was when Melvin was “going with” Barbara. (In that small group, everyone seemed to take turns “going with” someone. There wasn’t a whole lot of variety, and we stayed friends – even if the competition was stiff.)

We all knew that Barbara was away with her family for that weekend, and all of us got a little concerned when Melvin didn’t show up at C.E. on time to get going with “leading the singing,” like he usually did. (Sam Brunson probably filled in for him that night.) Melvin finally got there – a few minutes after the meeting had started. He wasn’t alone. He walked in with a beautiful young lady that none of us had ever seen before. (*Oh boy! Wait until Barbara hears about this!*)

She seemed rather shy. Melvin sat down in one of the chairs, but she sat down a couple seats away from him. Melvin leaned over toward her, whispered something to her, then patted the chair next to him. She slid over beside him. Of course everyone was gawking! Somehow I couldn’t resist saying aloud, from where I was sitting in the back row, *Next thing we know she’ll be sitting on his lap!* Everyone cracked up laughing! I’d made my point!

That was the first time I’d ever seen Lenore Cain.

The young person who was “leader” for that night asked Melvin to please introduce the visitor who was with him. He did, and he had her stand up. Then he told the group that she was with her parents when they’d gone to visit his parents that afternoon, so when it got to be time for him to leave for Christian Endeavor he asked her if she’d like to go along with him. Her parents had said that would be all right, and that they’d drive over for the Sunday night service in their



car, at the same time Melvin's parents would be going in their car. That was how Lenore was going to get home.

I'd already decided that I'd like to offer to take her home, if Melvin didn't mind – after all, "he was going with Barbara." Lilly Moore might not have been very happy with that arrangement, but that's the way it was with our "social life" in the little community of Otterbein.

None of us could figure out why Florence Ratliff made such a big deal about greeting the new girl after the C.E. meeting was over. We also noticed that Lenore acted as if she already knew Florence. Later, we found out that a few years back Lenore had lived on a ranch that was in the Puente school district, and had graduated from eighth grade at Hudson Grammar School. That was where "Miss Ratliff" was principal, and a teacher, too. They remembered each other very well, but Lenore hadn't had any idea about where "Miss Ratliff" lived, nor where she went to church.

It wasn't long before I found out that I hadn't really made points with the new girl when I shot off my mouth like I did. And I also found out later that her parents considered that she was "too young to go out with boys." Eventually, I found out that Lenore lived on a ranch over in Brea Canyon, and was finishing up her junior year – just like I was, but she attended Brea-Olinda High School. *Why couldn't she still be in the Puente school district?* I kept wondering!

My life really got complicated then, but I will forever be grateful to the Lord for bringing Lenore into my life that evening – in the spring of '35.

## Chapter 20

### My Last Year of High School

By the time the summer wound down in 1935, and it was time to start my senior year of high school, my routines were pretty well established. It had been a year since Mother and I had moved from Pasadena to The Grove; Mr. Keckley had “put me through the paces” in helping me learn how to handle the various aspects of the work required to maintain an orange grove, and I was feeling a part of the community.

During the summer, between a session of irrigating and waiting for time to disk and furrow in preparation for the next irrigation period, I’d been able to go to Camp Bethel for a few days. The Southern California division of the Evangelical United Brethren (EUB) churches, the full name of the denomination that Bell Memorial Church was in, held a summer camp for teens and college age young people at that location. Camp Bethel was located on San Dimas Canyon Drive, north of Foothill Boulevard. (We’ve tried to find it in recent years, but all of the old landmarks have been replaced by homes, and the San Dimas Canyon Country Club and Golf Course seem to be situated where the conference grounds were located.)

Practically all of the kids from Bell Memorial Church went to camp, and we got to meet other young people who were there from the Los Angeles, Long Beach and other Southern California areas.

In addition to Camp, there were rallies for the Pomona Valley Christian Endeavor Association, and Florence Ratliff made sure that our little church was well represented at those meetings. I don’t remember if they were monthly or quarterly meetings, but we all looked forward to going. Those rallies were in various churches in different nearby towns, and we were especially glad when they happened to be in one or the other of the Pomona churches. We had no trouble at all in convincing Florence, and the other drivers, that we needed to stop at Shartel’s afterward, before driving back to Otterbein.

Without question, Shartel’s was the most wonderful “malt shop” in all of the world! The malts were made in large malt *glasses* – really thick glass, and they were snapped into place on the malted milk mixing machines, just like the metal containers that were used at other places. But those glasses held at least twice as much as the “regulation size” containers! Cost? Ten cents! If a guy was really hungry, they had hamburgers that were the forerunners of Big Macs and Carls Jr’s., combined. In other words, they were huge! Of course they cost more than the malts: the hamburgers were fifteen cents.

By that time, Lenore Cain was a regular member of the Otterbein gang, and her parents and she were almost always at church on Sundays, too. But when the group was going to church-related youth activities on days other than Sundays, her dad always dropped her off at the church, then drove back there to pick her up. It was fun to have her in the group, but it was disappointing that she was instructed to “always ride in Florence’s car,” when the kids were going to activities away from Otterbein.

Once in a while a few of us would go into Pomona on a week night, for a non-church outing. We’d take in a show at the Fox theatre, then go to Shartel’s afterward. (We couldn’t leave Pomona without stopping in at Shartel’s!) Of course that made for an expensive evening – it cost twenty cents to get into the theatre, so if we were treating a “date” we’d emphasize ahead of time that we’d stop at Shartel’s for just a malt. I doubt if any one of us ever had more than a dollar in our pocket – even for “big-time stuff.” (Lenore wasn’t along for those times, since they



weren't "church" activities. But there were several other girls to choose from, there in our little community of Otterbein.

Of course, when the whole gang wasn't going somewhere, the smaller group of us would get together for our "music making." We were beginning to sound pretty good, and I really enjoyed that guitar!

When school actually started, I couldn't help but wonder what I'd be doing at that same time the next year. School had always gone routinely for me in Pasadena – with the "6-4-4" plan. I'd always looked forward to going directly into my first two years of college, instead of graduating at the end of twelfth grade, or the "senior year," as it was going to be for me at Puente High. I tried to shove those concerns into the back of my mind, and get on with what I had to do.

I liked math, mechanical drawing (drafting), and other subjects related to the broad field of engineering – I was sure that after more schooling I would be able to focus-in on some specific field of engineering. I also like the auto shop class, and I knew that training would be valuable in knowing how to maintain my own car (if I ever had a car of my own!). The woodworking classes were interesting, too; but I especially like those classes that gave me training in things that were creative and challenging, and would prepare me for a future vocation.

Attending to the work at The Grove was always just what I "had to do." I'd already decided I wasn't interested in being a citrus grower forever! I hadn't happened to mention that to Mother, but it surely must have been becoming obvious.

### **My Pole Vaulting "Grand Finale"**

When I was in my senior year, I made the track team again, and I was excited about it! But as I've already said any number of times, it was hard to be so excited about something like that, but still not be able to talk about it at home. To be sure, "my sins found me out!"

It was in the spring of 1936, at an intramural meet at Excelsior High, in Norwalk, that I cleared the bar with a 12-foot, 8-inch vault. Not only did that take first place for that meet, but it also set a school record. (I found out later that that record remained until fiberglass poles became regulation equipment for pole vaulting. Those new poles would bend, thereby giving the vaulter extra height.)

I had no idea that the results of that meet would be printed in the little Puente newspaper, and that was the beginning of the end for me! Even though we didn't take the newspaper, several of our friends in Otterbein did and, in Mother's presence, they began talking to me about the record I'd set.

Oh boy! Mother got herself to the telephone at Coopers', called the school, and talked to Coach "Mac." She told him that she did not want me pole vaulting; told him about my broken arm; told him that she needed for me to be "healthy" so I could do the work on The Grove; told him that she would not be responsible for anything else that might happen.

How did I find out? I was called into Coach "Mac's" office, and he had to tell me about the phone call. He was very sympathetic about the situation (I was reminded of how understanding Mr. Lyons had always seemed to be when I'd been summoned to his office). However, he told me that he had no choice other than to "ground me" from pole vaulting, but since Mother hadn't mentioned anything else, he did let me remain on the 440-relay team for the rest of the season.

I felt really bad about the whole thing, and the atmosphere at home was very chilly, too. But by then the track season was practically over, and in just another couple of months, or so, I'd be graduating.

Thus ended my pole-vaulting career.

## Our "New" '29 Chevy

Sometime in the spring of '36, a while before my high school graduation, Mother began to complain about how expensive it seemed to be getting to "operate" the old Hudson. Believe me, I took advantage of her feelings and used that as a cue to begin pushing for a "smaller and more economical" car. My friends were already referring to the Hudson as a "boxcar," and I couldn't help but agree.

I began "looking" – solo! Anytime I could find a reason to go to Pomona without Mother, or while she would be shopping in town – after I would have driven her in, I'd spend time looking around in used car lots. One day I saw what I considered to be just about the sharpest car I'd seen – a '29 Chevy cabriolet. It had 1934 wire wheels, a soft-top, a rumble seat – all of the "in" things that were so very important to an almost eighteen-year-old guy.

The salesman even let me drive it a little, and that's all it took for me to really fall in love with it. But all of the time I was thinking, *I'll never be able to 'sell' Mother on this – after all, it's around five-hundred dollars!*

After I'd calmed down to "casual," I told Mother about the car I'd *just happen to see one day*, and would she like to go see it? All the way to Pomona (I was driving the old Hudson with mentally crossed fingers!) I talked about how much better gas mileage we'd get with that smaller car, and how much more practical it would be. (I knew those were true facts; would she agree?) After we got to the car lot, she looked it over good – with the salesman hot on our heels. He suggested that we "take it for a spin." I drove her around a few blocks, and she was "favorably impressed." I was ecstatic!

The deal was made, right then and there, and neither Mother nor I shed any tears when we left the Hudson on the lot, and drove home from Pomona in our new possession! That "new" car did a lot toward helping me get over the pole-vaulting situation.

We already knew that Mr. Keckley would agree to let us keep it in his big shed, where we'd always kept the Hudson. But with that sharp little "new" car, I convinced Mother that there was plenty of room to keep it parked in the small (very small!) yard in front of The Shack. It did get parked in Mr. Keckley's shed during bad weather, though. Nothing but the best for that little car!

A snag: Mother made it very clear that this was *her* car, that she would be the keeper of the keys (so what else was new?), and would have the "say" as to its use. (*Leverage*, in everyday language.)

Well, all of that ultimatum necessitated a slight modification to the electrical system of the "new" Chevy – namely, the ignition. Objective: to eliminate the need for a key! Words cannot express how handy that became!

I don't think my dear mother ever knew anything about that modification to *her* car: Whenever I would drive her somewhere, she always gave me the key – "so I could start the car." She never even seemed to question why, from time to time, I would suggest that *it might be best if we do keep the car in Mr. Keckley's shed for a while*. (How could I "borrow" *her* car without her knowing it, if it were parked outside our front door?) I'm not one bit proud of that deception on my part, but a lot of things had strong bearings on a lot of my actions during those years.

## High School Graduation

Puente High School's Class of 1936 graduation was pathetic – when compared to today's standards. I think there were about 35 graduating seniors. After the ceremony a bunch of us went



to Olvera Street, in Los Angeles, in Merlin Elmore's car. (Merlin wasn't going to be a senior until the following year, but his dad was good about letting him use their family car, and Merlin was very much a part of our close-knit Otterbein gang.) It wasn't a big deal, but it was fun – much better than my John Marshall graduation night!

### Decisions for Fall

I knew the routine for summer very well: Get the disking and furrowing done throughout The Grove, and be all ready for irrigating. But it was also a time when, with school over for the summer, I could manage some time to work for some of the other growers. I was *very* glad for the little bit of money I could earn by doing that.

Then, one day Mother made a big announcement of the decision *she* had made for *me*. Since I was learning the various aspects of taking care of our grove, she thought it would be a very good idea for me to learn more about the *scientific side* of being a citrus grower. How she'd found out about it I never did figure out, but she'd *heard* that Chaffey Junior College offered an excellent course in *Citriculture*. (At that time, Chaffey J.C. was located in Upland; now it's Chaffey College, and it's in Rancho Cucamonga.) Mother had also decided that enrolling there for the fall term would be an excellent way of my preparing for my future, and that I could even drive *her* car back and forth to school.

Goody for her! *Citriculture*? I *knew* that I didn't want to spend the rest of my life being a citrus grower!

I began talking – hard and fast! *I couldn't possibly drive that distance each day, take a full load of junior college classes, and still find time for doing all of the necessary work there at home.* (I probably even threw in the fact that I'd *hardly* have time to chop all of the wood that was needed for our wood-burning stove!)

Within myself, I knew that if I ever did get a chance to go to college I wanted to take some engineering classes – of some kind! Of course, I didn't tell her that!

Her mind was made up. She'd even decided that it would be better to pay someone like Jeff Johnson to do at least part of the work – if I wouldn't have time for everything. Then, after I'd completed that course, I'd really be well prepared to "take over."

### School Days – Again, for the Future Citrus Magnate

It lasted two weeks! I hated it! And already Mother had had to pay someone to sow the mustard seeds for the cover crop. It was obvious that I probably wouldn't have time to get the smudge pots cleaned up and ready for filling. Then, what about wintertime? And smudging?

By then Mother had decided that it would be best for me to simply drop out of school so I would have time to do all of the work on our place, and perhaps have enough spare time to do more work for other growers in our neighborhood – for pay!

I heartily agreed to the deal. *Anything* to not have to not have to continue with taking the *Citriculture* course, and to have some time to earn some money! (Maybe I'd be able to find a *real* job, and still have time to take care of our grove.)

On Monday of what would have been my third week at Chaffey J.C., I made one more drive to school – to check out of the classes, and turn in my books.

I had never intended that my schooling would end so abruptly; I had a deep feeling of discontent. I knew that in no way could I ever get into my desired field of engineering without the education to prepare me for it.

I felt like I was drifting.

## Chapter 21

### “Will Work – for Money!”

Just because I felt like I was drifting, and my future loomed up like a great big Question Mark, I wasn't about to sit around The Shack and strum my guitar – in between the spurts of work required in maintaining The Grove. I wanted some money, and I sure wasn't getting any from just working there at home.

Even before this time of being out of school (for *keeps*, as far as I knew then – although I certainly hoped that wasn't the case!), I had been doing some “hit ‘n miss” work for some of the people in the neighborhood.

I've already mentioned how Mr. Keckley was good at letting me help him out whenever he needed an extra hand, and I always wanted to do *those* little jobs as favors in return for his goodness to me. The variety of work had been good experience for me, and it seemed that the men around had gotten to know me, and had become confident that I'd do my best at any job. If I didn't understand just what it was they needed, I'd either ask them more about it, or go talk it over with Mr. Keckley or Jeff Johnson. I knew I could always depend on them, and that meant a lot to me.

Every once in a while I'd hear about a job that someone was needed for, or one of the men in the neighborhood would come knocking on our door (no telephone, remember?) to ask if I could give him a hand. No matter what it was, I'd give it a try. I really had some memorable experiences – some good, some not so good. I'll tell about some of them.

### Hurleys' Dairy

Jeff Johnson knew a Mr. Hurley, a man who ran a small dairy near Puente, and Jeff found out that Mr. Hurley was temporarily short of help. Up until then, the most I'd known about milk was pouring it from a bottle, but I was determined I could learn “the dairy business.”

As I recall, there were two other guys (regulars) and me. I had to get over to the dairy and be ready to start milking about five o'clock in the morning. It took me a while to get the hang of “stripping and pulling,” but I soon got pretty good at it.

During the time the cows were being milked, they weren't about to go anyplace. Their necks were secured in stanchions, and they munched away on the hay that was in the mangers – just under their chins. They slapped at flies with their tails, and more than once a tail would zip across the milker's face! I remember!

When a bucket was filled, the milker emptied it into a large container in the little room where the processing was done. Then back to the business of milking. When the task was finished, the cows were turned back out into the large feeding corrals, or let out to graze in the nearby pastureland. (They couldn't roam far away, since the whole operation had to be repeated in the late afternoon.)

Then it was cleanup time! The milking barn had to be hosed down good. The Hurleys' dairy was kept clean – inspectors made their rounds without advance notice!



The farm kitchen was the next stop after finishing up in the milking barn. Mrs. Hurley and their two daughters, Jean and Daisy, had breakfast waiting for the milking crew.

After breakfast, the "regulars" and I would go to work at whatever else needed to be done. Mr. Hurley could always keep us busy with bailing hay, cutting corn stocks into fodder, or whatever.

Mr. and Mrs. Hurley took care of the processing of the milk, there in their little processing room. Back in those days, the "separator" was a large series of stainless steel bowls, spouts, gears, cogs, wheels, and a hand-crank. That operation separated the cream from the "skim" milk. The butter-making processing was done in another corner of the room, using the hand-operated butter churn. When the milk, cream and butter were ready for delivery, that's when Jean and Daisy went to work. I well remember them in their little Model A Ford truck, as they brought our milk to the door there at The Shack, even before I had a part in that great "industry."

At noontime we'd take a half-hour break for lunch, then it was "back to work" until late afternoon. That's when it was time to herd the milk cows back into the milking barn, and finish up the day in the same way it had been started.

I only dovetailed that in occasionally, during times when Mr. Hurley was short of help, and when there were "slack times" with the work on The Grove. Even though Mr. Hurley paid a dollar-fifty a day, I don't think I would have worked there any longer – even if there *hadn't* been a grove that was depending on me for its care!

### Working for Mr. Martin

Mr. Ed Martin lived just east of Otterbein Avenue, across from the church. He owned about 15 acres of oranges, and he took care of his grove with the help of his son "Tee" (for "Tommy," I think), and a hired man who worked for him full time.

Occasionally he would need more help for some specific thing, and I was glad that he would always ask me because he had one pat rate -- \$3.00 a day. No matter the job, and no matter if it could be finished in five hours, eight hours, or if you had to work up until dark to get it done, it was still \$3.00 a day.

That was good money in those days!

### Harvesting Walnuts

Early September was walnut harvesting time, and I can remember working for Frank Hostetler during some of those seasons. Frank's residence and citrus acreage were on south of his brother Ed's grove, down on the southwest corner of Nogales Street and Fifth Avenue (Colima Road, now), but he had another piece of land out east of us, and it had just a few walnut trees on it. There weren't enough to make it worthwhile for him to engage an entire walnut picking crew, so he asked me if I would like to do the job. Yes, of course I would!

Walnuts are shaken off the trees by using a pole about 12-feet in length, with a large iron hook attached to one end. From where he stands on the ground, the "shaker," "picker," or whatever he's called, reaches up with the pole, places the hook over a branch and pulls on it vigorously, then *ducks* while the nuts rain down! If a few nuts are left on the branch, the "picker" "hooks and shakes" the branch a few more times. This operation is repeated until the entire tree has been shaken, branch by branch. Then the fun begins!

The next step is for the "shaker" to start *picking*! That is, the nuts have to be picked up off the ground – I used a large bucket to put them in.

Unless a person has actually *seen* a freshly harvested walnut, he might not know that a tough-skinned, green-colored hull covers the shell, and no one wants walnuts with those hulls still on. Removing them is part of the picker's job.

After I got my bucket filled with the nuts I'd picked up, I sat down on the ground to start "peeling." This wasn't exactly a speedy operation, but after some practice I got pretty fast at it. The "hulling knife" is similar to a carpet knife – the blade was curved a bit, and it was *sharp*! It didn't take long to learn to be real careful with that knife, because it didn't take any practice at all to cut my fingers instead of the hulls.

The "huller" cuts across the top of the hull, lays the knife down, then peels the hull off of the nut with his two thumbs. One thing for sure, the huller's fingers were going to get stained to a dark blackish brown color, and there was nothing that would take it off. It was just something to live with until it would eventually wear off. (While I was still in school, it was no problem at all to spot the kids who were involved in walnut picking – for weeks their fingers were all the same color!)

Now, back to the subject: After a nut was hulled, it would be dropped into another container. Then, when that container was filled the contents would be poured into a gunnysack.

Next step – back to picking up the nuts from the ground, fill Bucket #1; sit down on the ground to start hulling, fill Bucket # 2; dump those into the gunnysack, and so on, until that tree was finished. Then it was time to move to the next tree. And then, the *next* tree! (The green hulls were just left on the ground, and after a while the sun would have dried them until they just crackled and disintegrated into the soil.)

How much did I make? One dollar per gunnysack full of hulled walnuts, and that was about half-a-days' work.

### Working for Mr. Houser

Mr. Houser was a dear old man who, along with his wife, lived a couple doors south of the church. He truly loved the Lord, and always led the prayer meetings at church on Wednesday evenings. I highly respected him.

Every once in a while he would ask me to do little jobs for him, and I was always glad to. I remember once he had a broken step by his back door, and he asked me to repair it. Then, there was another time that he'd bought a new mail box and needed to have it installed on a post out by the street (Otterbein Avenue). But, before mounting it on the post, he wanted me to paint their name and house number on it. (I always felt a little surge of pride every time I glanced at it when I passed by.)

Mr. Houser had just a few Valencia orange trees out behind his house, complete with two or three smudge pots. Since his property was fairly close to our grove, he asked me if I'd take care of the work required for maintaining those few trees at the same time I was involved with ours. I would have been glad to do his work as a favor, but he always insisted on paying me. He didn't have a "per-hour pay rate," but very often he'd give me a few dollars. (I'm sure most of the men in the neighborhood knew of my circumstances, and I really appreciated those men.)

I really admired Mr. Houser's 1934 Ford V-8, and I thought he and Mrs. Houser looked very dignified when I'd see them drive by The Shack – probably on their way to Puente to get groceries. But there was a time that his health declined, and he didn't feel "up to" driving. Occasionally, at times like that, when they needed to go to Pomona for a doctor's appointment, he would ask me to drive them – *in their car*! I absolutely would *not* accept any money for him for that. Having the fun of driving that car was much better than money!



## Removing Walnut Trees

One day Jeff Johnson approached me about removing some old walnut trees. He said there were only a few, and he was sure they'd be easy to take out. He said he would pay me three dollars per tree for felling them and cutting off the main branches. He was going to take care of "disposing of them," meaning: he'd cut them into firewood to *sell*.

That sounded like a pretty good deal to me – I thought I could take down at least two a day. Six dollars a day sounded *real* good in those days!

So, armed with a shovel and an axe, I went to work good and early one morning. By mid-afternoon of that same day I was still working on the first tree, and it was still showing no signs of cooperating. I came to the conclusion that there must be a better way! I walked back to The Shack to get the car so I could drive over to my friend Merlin Elmore's – to enlist some help.

Life in general had become a little more tolerable for me since Mother had finally reached the point that she would usually let me use the car if I told her where I was going, *and if* she approved of where I wanted to go. Since the Elmore family wasn't still renting the parsonage, which would have been within walking distance, I needed the car to drive to where they had moved – a few miles to the west. My mother recognized my dilemma, so I was soon on my way.

Merlin was willing to give me a hand, so he followed me back in his dad's old Chrysler. (Whether his dad knew about it, or not, I'm not sure. That was Merlin's circumstance.) For good measure, he'd thrown a long rope and some chain into the back seat, along with an axe, shovel, and a big two-man "buck" saw. I'd promised him a share in the wealth, so he was all ready to get to work. I had the method of attack all planned out, and I was sure it was going to be a cinch, now. Oh yeah?

I had already gone around the first tree about ten feet out from the trunk, had dug down and cut each root which, at that point, was about four inches in diameter. Then I had gone around the trunk about three feet out, dug down, then cut off the roots close to where they joined the trunk. By removing those roots all around the tree, I was able to get down to the lower ones.

Now that Merlin was there with the rope and the big heavy car, we thought we had it made. Since I had already cut all the surface roots, or, at least all that I could find, there was nothing left to do but pull the tree over. Or so we thought!

One of us climbed up into the tree and secured one end of the rope to a main center branch; we fastened the other end to the back of the big old Chrysler. We had thought ahead enough, and had cut off the branches on the car-side of the tree, so when it did come down it wouldn't land on the car – we hoped!

So, with "all systems go," Merlin got into the car and started driving – very slowly – in the lowest gear he could find. All was going fine: There was snapping and cracking of breaking roots, and great rejoicing on our parts – until the tree had had enough. Upon reaching its elastic limit, it reversed its direction – lifting the rear end of the car several inches off the ground!

There were a few moments of great excitement as we tried to figure out what to do next. (Fast-forward sixty-plus years; I'm sure it would have made *America's Funniest Videos*.)

It wasn't funny then, not one bit! By then the rear wheels were about six inches off the ground! Very wisely, we decided to turn off the motor, take the car out of gear, then *push* it backward until the rear wheels were once again on terra firma.

We were right back where we'd started from; we could almost hear the tree laughing at us! However, we persisted, dug around and found – and cut! – several roots that had been overlooked, and once again tried with the car. This time, with success!

And so, after nearly a week we had all the trees down – I think there were about six or seven, altogether. After divvying up with Merlin, we each had about ten dollars in our pockets, and we were very happy to advance up to the next run on the ladder to financial success.

### **Working Along with Chet Handly**

Chet Handly worked for Mrs. Bell, the widow of the late Bishop Bell for whom Bell Memorial church had been named. She had a lovely home down south of the church, on the east side of Otterbein Avenue, and her orange grove consisted of at least ten or fifteen acres of trees.

Chet had a younger brother, Bob, and he was about my age, but Chet was at least fifteen years older. They were both active in our Christian Endeavor group at the church, and they were part of my “inner circle” of very special friends.

We worked together a lot, especially Chet and I. We helped each other out of “tight spots” without any thought of compensation. We knew we could depend on each other if either of us needed help with putting out oil, getting last minute furrowing done before time for the irrigating water to be turned on by Mr. Dellinger – just all of those kinds of things.

They were really nice guys, and we had good times talking together. Bob was going with Mary Ellen Combs, and Lois, her older sister who was a year or so younger than I, seemed to “hang around” Chet a lot. None of us kids could figure her out – we thought it was all “one-sided.” One day while Chet and I were working together, he really surprised me! He told me that he was *in love* (this guy sounded serious!) with Lois, but he was afraid that he was too old for her.

Apparently Lois didn’t think so! Eventually the Handly brothers married the Combs sisters, and each couple had wonderfully long and happy marriages.

It’s good to remember those special times of working together with friends.

### **Halterbreaking Colts**

I’ve always enjoyed horses and have seemed to have the ability to understand them – of course there have been a few exceptions, but not many. I credit a lot of my “ability” to people like Jeff Johnson who I used to think could talk “horse talk” better than anyone I ever knew.

From the time I was just a little guy going out to The Grove with my folks, I can remember Jeff taking me into his barn and “introducing” me to his big bay horses, Barney and Nellie. He kept up a constant line of chatter on the subject of “horse-a-culture,” I called it. I asked lots of questions, and he always had the answers.

Every once in a while when he was driving somewhere with Barney and Nellie pulling his wagon, he’d stop by The Shack and ask my folks if I could go along with him. They’d say yes, and I’d scramble up onto the seat beside him. As we’d go plodding along, he’d be explaining the mysteries of getting his team to respond to the reins. Then one day Jeff told me to hold my hands “just so,” and he slipped the reins over into them! I couldn’t believe that Barney and Nellie were “obeying” *my* “driving”! (I know now that they weren’t really; they probably could have clomped along those familiar roads without anyone holding the reins!) Through the next few years I learned a lot about horses from Jeff.

All of that as a little background for what I’m about to write about now. I’ll jump ahead several years – to when I was about eighteen.

Jeff was known in the area for his ability to train horses. Often one neighbor, or another, would bring a horse to Jeff for boarding, and for him to work with to break a bad habit. He kept



one stall in his barn just for this purpose – I think it was large enough for a couple horses. (He always kidded about it being his source of a “little extra pocket money.”)

If I knew he was working with a horse, it was always of great interest to me; I’d get over to his place as often as I could – just to watch, and maybe pick up a few pointers.

There was a time that Jeff was experiencing some physical problems which I knew about, and I don’t know if that was the reason that he was involving me more and more in the interesting things that he was doing, or if it was just because he sensed my interest; no matter which it was, I was paying attention!

There’s one thing in particular that I remember, and I want to write about it.

It seems that Jeff had a friend, a Mr. Dragna; I’m not sure just where he lived, but I had heard of him, and I knew he had cattle and horses on quite a “spread.” Anyway, he had asked Jeff to halterbreak some of his yearling colts. “Halterbreaking” is the “skill” of getting a young horse used to wearing a halter and being led by one, and it usually preceded saddle breaking by several months.

I don’t remember the circumstances of why Mr. Dragna had asked Jeff to do this instead of doing it himself, but I was glad that he did! It gave me an opportunity to learn something new and interesting.

Jeff told me about it, knowing that I’d be over to his place the first chance I got. When I got there he took me out to his barn to see two beautiful young colts – probably ten or eleven months old. I believe he told me that, altogether, there were eight to be halter trained, but he’d only be working with two at a time – about all he could handle at once.

Jeff explained that halterbreaking, or getting used to the halter, was one of the first steps in training a good riding horse, for when the horse would be saddle-broken in a few months it would be with the use of a halter; a bridle would come later.

A halter is much like a bridle except for the fact that it has no bit; that is, nothing goes into the horse’s mouth. On either side of the nose strap there are rings that a lead rope may be snapped onto; then, eventually a set of reins would be attached to those rings.

Jeff told me that if I would have the time to “help” him he would tell me what to do. I was ecstatic! I think The Grove could have dried up for all I cared! Well, not really, but I *was* excited!

First, he had me “get acquainted” with the colts, and they with me. That took several days . . . and several carrots. When it got to where I could walk up to them and rub their ears while shoving carrots into their mouths, Jeff said it was time to try the halters. (They’d wear those for a few days until they got used to them, before the next steps would be taken.)

Jeff had several halters hanging on nails on the barn wall, and he picked out a couple that he thought would do. After a short lecture from him on how to go about it, I could hardly wait to give it a try.

A halter, like a bridle, is slipped over on the horse’s nose, then extended up to behind the ears. There’s a strap that goes behind the ears, another forward of the ears, and there is a strap for under the chin. Cheek straps, on either side, can be adjusted for length.

So I picked out one of the colts and, following Jeff’s instructions, I backed him into a corner of the stall. I had adjusted the halter to what I thought would fit him, put a rope around his neck – loosely, so I could control him if necessary, held a carrot in one hand and the halter in the other. As he went for the carrot, I slipped the nose strap over his nose and pulled it up over his ears. The cheek straps required some minor adjusting, and that was it. I removed the rope from around his neck, then watched him shake his head. I offered him another carrot – and we were friends.

I repeated the procedure with the other colt, and had nearly identical results – except he knew the pocket where the carrots were and kept trying to get his nose down into it. That made it difficult to get the halter on over his nose, but I finally made it.

After several days of getting used to wearing the halters, Jeff had me snap a lead rope on one colt at a time, then take him out of his stall and into the big world outside. Once ~~out~~ we were out there, I took a few wraps of the rope around a sturdy fence post, being careful to give him plenty of slack. He pawed the rope a little, shook his head a lot, then stood looking at me as if to say, "OK, what's next?"

I talked to him and pulled gently on the rope until his neck was stretched about to the limit. With his first step toward me, I took a carrot out of my pocket – while keeping tension on the rope. A couple more steps, then he was reaching his nose out for the carrot; I loosened the rope from the fence post and, with the carrot in plain sight, backed up several steps with him following. (I had a destination in mind, but I kept that a secret from the colt.)

When he was more relaxed, and walking, I led him down to the little stream that ran on the north side of Jeff's property (San Jose Creek). We walked along the stream for a short distance, then stopped at the edge of the creek where he dropped his nose down into the water.

After a long cool drink he responded to a gentle tug on the rope, and while I maintained a tension on the rope we must have walked a hundred yards, or so. I stopped, gave him a carrot, then led him back to the barn.

Jeff, who had been watching, was both surprised and very complimentary. I gave the little guy a hug, took the rope off his halter, and was very pleased with the first day of kindergarten for that little horse!

A few days later the same procedure was used on the second colt with similar results. Within a week or so, I could lead either one with little or no resistance.

Yeah, it took a pocket full of carrots, but it was worth it!

I had hoped to be able to help Jeff work with some of the others of Mr. Dragna's horses, but work on The Grove prevented further involvement. I had worked with the first two for the fun of it, but Jeff surprised me by giving me a few dollars for halterbreaking those colts. He said that my help had been valuable to him. I really appreciated the money but, most of all, I appreciated the time Jeff had taken to teach me another lesson in "horse-a-culture."



## Chapter 22

### Electricity!

It didn't happen soon enough to "shed any light" on my homework because I was no longer in school when we moved one step closer to civilization, late in 1936. That was when some people by the name of Leister bought the three acres on the east side of our property. Up until then, there hadn't been a house any closer than the Browns' place, down toward the church. Mother and I hadn't had "next door neighbors" since we'd left Pasadena and The Holliston House, where Mr. and Mrs. Woodhouse lived in the home west of us.

I knew it would seem different, but right away I found out that something good was going to happen because of them. They liked the property just fine, but they definitely wanted to have electricity in the new house they intended to build on it. Electricity! That was another "luxury" that Mother and I hadn't had since we'd moved from Pasadena.

When I overheard them talking with Mother about what they hoped she'd agree to, I began hoping, too! As I've mentioned earlier, the electric service from the east and the south had only been installed as far as the corner to the east of us – to the church and the few homes that were closest to it. Mr. and Mrs. Leister wanted to have the line extended as far west as their new property, and had found that the ideal termination point would be where the two properties joined. They asked Mother if she would be interested in sharing that cost with them.

I think if it had been closer to the time that we'd first moved there Mother would probably have said no. But after two years, plus, of kerosene lamps and no electric iron, she promptly agreed to the proposal. I couldn't believe it! I was that much closer to having cleaned my last lamp chimney!

It was a glorious evening when we could finally flip a switch and have light! But, probably what we mutually enjoyed the most was being able to once again turn the knob on our Majestic console radio that we'd brought to The Shack from The Holliston House. Yes, we'd only been able to *look* at it, but now we could both *listen* at the same time – instead of having to take turns with the earphones on the little battery-powered one-tuber that I'd made years before in Pasadena. Of course there were conflicts: Mother wanted to listen to "Myrt and Marge," and I wanted to hear "Amos and Andy." Undoubtedly, the biggest flap was trying to convince her that "B. A. Rolf, and His Lucky Strike Hit Parade" was really a *classical* music program, just played in a "little different" tempo. But probably the most important use of the radio would come that winter – when we could both hear the frost warning broadcasts.

The electric company (I don't remember if it was "Edison" in those days, or some local utility company) installed the service, and I'll try to remember some of the details.

Because of the flimsy structure of The Shack, it was decided to bring the three wires in from the pole out at the street to a ten- or twelve-foot 4-by-4-inch service post. That post had been securely anchored into a hole with about three feet of cement. Then, with the weight of the wires supported on the post, the service entrance head and the meter were installed on the outside of the east wall of The Shack. Of course, according to code (yes, *code*, even back in those days!) the wiring was run through metal conduit from the service head down to the meter.

From below the meter, the service ran through the wall of The Shack through an entry "L" to the fuse box. It seems that I remember that it, the fuse box, was mounted on the inside of

the wall in the southeast corner of the service porch that Mother had had added on after we moved out there. I think it was a 60-ampere, three-circuit service.

(I'm sure this has been a lot of boring detail, but it has been interesting to me to see how much I can remember about it. I know that at the time I was fascinated in watching the installation – it all fell right into the category of the type of thing I've always been interested in – creativity.)

Mother hired Mr. Holland to do the inside wiring. (He was the same “neighborhood handyman” she had hired to do some work to make The Shack more livable before we moved out there from Pasadena, and a few modifications afterward, too.) He installed the light receptacles and several power outlets. We had him put a weather-tight outlet on the outside of the house, below the kitchen window. That was handy to use with extension cords for a light, or whatever, behind the house (and it was used quite often.).

After he had finished the wiring, Mother had Mr. Holland cover the interior with wall boarding. What an improvement that was! Although it did deprive the wasps (we called them “mud daubers”) of building their mud “condominiums” up in the corners of the wall studs which had always been exposed. (As long as we lived there, neither Mother nor I were ever stung by one of those wasps; we got used to them, and they to us.)

Our new neighbor, Carroll Leister, was doing his own house wiring on their new home next door, and he was very helpful in giving me some technical advice. I'd always wished for an outdoor light that would shine in the direction of the oil reservoir. Working from the suggestions he made, I was able to mount a receptacle for a flood light on top of the service post, and tied it in to the heaviest fused circuit available in the service box. I put an “On-Off” switch on the side of the post, down where it could be easily reached.

I'd had no idea how soon I would be depending on that floodlight to help me see what I had to be doing at the oil reservoir! That winter required the heaviest smudging that even the old-timers had experienced, and there was night after night of work!

Yes indeed, any convenience was gladly accepted at times like that!



## Chapter 23

### The Big Freeze

Mother and I couldn't believe how soon we were going to be glued to our "new" electrically powered radio so we wouldn't miss one word of Floyd Young's "Frost Warnings" broadcasts.

I consider it to have been quite coincidental that just recently I happened to read a current magazine article that referred back to that season. The historian wrote, "The low temperatures of the winter of 1936-'37 still hold the record as the worst for Southern California's citrus growers." I, for one, will never forget it!

For thirteen consecutive nights, from just after Christmas until into the new year, we had to "fire." On several of those nights smudging started as early as eight o'clock in the evening, and continued until six or seven the next morning, with the temperatures dropping into the teens.

If that had been my first winter of being responsible for the care of our place, I don't think our grove would have survived. But even though it was my third winter, I don't know how I, and all of the other growers around, survived! The ordeal didn't help one bit in improving my attitude toward working on The Grove, and I'm sure it did much to influence me that it wasn't the "career" I wanted for my adult life.

It proved to be a good thing that I wasn't in school; if I had still been enrolled at Chaffey Junior College, I would never have been able to keep up with classes. Actually, I would even have had trouble getting there – the entire valley was so darkened with smudge smoke that it made even daytime driving very difficult. And homework would have been too piled up for me to ever catch up.

But, for then my only assignment was to "cope."

During that terrible time, growers were helping each other, and even people on neighboring ranches – ones who were not citrus growers – were helping in any way they could. It was a real cooperative effort, with no thought of compensation.

Many growers ran out of smudging oil and were forced to burn anything they could find – mostly old tires that were thrown in close to the trees. Many lost their crops of fruit that year; some even suffered tree damage to the extent that they had to be replaced.

We were fortunate! Because of being members of the Citrus Growers' Association we were able to get oil; I don't remember how many times we had to have the reservoir refilled! I was thankful for the team of mules and the sled that helped me get the buckets of oil from the reservoir to the pots during those long, hard nights. And I was indeed thankful for the new electric floodlight that was mounted on that 4-by-4 post – so I could see what I was doing at the reservoir.

Since "firing" had to begin around eight on some of the nights during that siege, there was little time for resting during the day. The dampers had to be freed up and the pots had to be filled – everything had to be ready to go before sundown. (Sometimes we had to go with what we had, and hope for the best – a guy could only do so much.)

I'll not repeat all of the details of the ordeal of smudging, since that subject was written about earlier, but I do want to tell about an additional "skill" that I'd mastered.

Mr. Keckley was busy with his own work during that "big freeze," so we couldn't help each other very much. However, he did accommodate me by allowing me the use of his Model T truck when he wasn't using it during the daytime, and I really appreciated that. During my past



two winters of smudging I had found out that it wasn't too difficult to get the oil pumped from the reservoir into the big tank on the truck while working alone. I knew I just had to see to it that the hose from the pump was well down into the opening in the top of the tank – so it wouldn't flop out while I was hand-operating that old centrifugal pump. By that winter of '36, I'd had quite a bit of practice at it!

When the tank was full, or nearly so (I never filled it completely because of the possibility of the lid jostling off and some of the oil sloshing out – it was too precious to waste any!), I'd drive to the first of the pots that were to be filled. I didn't come to a full stop until I was sure one of the front wheels was lined up in an old irrigation furrow that was still there from the last time of irrigating, but beginning to be pretty well covered over by the fast-growing mustard cover-crop. The plan was that I'd not need to be *in* the truck to steer the thing. When I was sure everything was lined up right, I pulled to a full stop.

Before progressing with the technique, a little description of the workings of a Model T Ford may be helpful. Just below the steering wheel, on the right side of the steering column, there was an "accelerator" *lever* – no "gas pedal" on the floor. The driver was kept busy by remembering the sequencing of operating the three pedals on the floor: The pedal on the left was for "low" gear; the middle pedal was the "reverse" gear; the right pedal was the "brake" – the one used for slowing the speed while driving. The "hand brake" was a floor-mounted, dual-purpose lever – on the left side of the cab, and high enough to be easily grasped by the left hand.

Now, with those descriptions well in mind, the rest of the operation may be easier to follow.

When I was sure one of the front wheels was lined up in an irrigation furrow in the frozen earth, I'd stop the truck, set the accelerator lever to just a little more than "idle" speed, bring the hand-brake lever back to the "out of gear" position (a "convenience" that was unique to a Model T Ford), leave the motor running, and get out of the truck. All systems were "go" – for me to start filling the pots.

I'd take the hose down, being sure the "shut-off" valve on the end was closed. While going from pot to pot, I controlled the flow of the oil by using the "shut-off." After filling the first one or two pots, however many I could reach per stop, I'd carry the hose to the left side of the cab of the truck. While hanging onto the hose with my left hand and arm, I'd reach into the cab with my right hand, release the brake lever to the "off" position, push the "low" gear pedal down with the heel of my hand, then continue to hold it down while the truck and I started forward – it "driving," I walking. Of course I had to watch closely to see that the front wheel stayed in the furrow. It's hard to believe, but that wasn't too difficult since it was many years previous to the invention of "power steering." (Mr. Keckley probably wouldn't have wanted to spend the extra money for such an "unnecessary luxury" anyway: "Just another thing to get out of whack!")

When the "creeping" truck got to the next set of pots that I knew I'd be able to reach with the hose, I'd release the pressure on the "low" gear pedal, once again pull on the hand-brake lever until it was in the "out of gear" position, and get on with the business of filling pots.

As long as the truck wheel stayed in a furrow, all went well. Of course, when I'd reach the end of the row of trees, I'd have to put the hose up on the bed of the truck, being sure it was wedged in good so it wouldn't fall off. Then I'd get into the cab and "drive the conventional way" – to get around the last tree, and head back up the next row. Once again, I'd line up the left front wheel in one of the irrigation furrows, get out of the truck, lift down the hose, and resume the operation.

That has been a lot of detail, and probably boring. But as I remember back to that dreadful thirteen-night freeze during the winter of 1936-'37, it was the one thing that was kind of fun. I knew it would soon be night, and after a few hours of smudging I would be back to refilling the smudge pots with the buckets in order to keep them burning.



But the most important fact, as I look back now, I knew it was the Lord who protected our little grove during that winter of "record low temperature." After it was all over, we found that we had no tree damage and very little fruit loss. That was indeed a miracle!

## Chapter 24

### Serious Employment

During that period of heavy smudging everything else had had to be put on “hold.” I was tired of that, and I was tired of just doing odds and ends of little jobs, here and there. By early in 1937 I was wishing I could have a “real” job somewhere, something that would pay a regular salary. As time went on, I had two “serious” jobs – one at a time, of course.

#### The Blue Goose Citrus Packing House

Jeff Johnson knew the manager of the Blue Goose Citrus Packing House in Pomona, and suggested that I go talk with him. His name was Ray Stagg, and he seemed very nice. The first thing I did when I met with him was explain about the work that I was responsible for on The Grove. He was very understanding, and said he thought it could be worked out. There was just one hitch: I needed to apply for a Social Security card. Even though I’d had my eighteenth birthday in October of 1936, soon after I’d checked out of Chaffey Junior College, I hadn’t needed a Social Security card for the “odd jobs” I’d been doing.

I didn’t want anything to stand in the way, so I got myself to the right government office and filled out the right form. My original Social Security card is still in my wallet – it’s dated “1-27-37”. Boy, was I ever proud of that!

(As a matter of interest, and according to the information in the *World Book Encyclopedia*, there had been no uniform “social security” plan in the United States before 1934; until that year various states had their own hit and miss laws for pensions and various other kinds of aids. The uniform plan, which was the foundation for the nation’s broad program, was begun with the implementation of the Social Security Act of 1935.)

I assured Mother that I could handle both the care of The Grove and the job at the packing house; her attitude was, “Well, we’ll see.” Of course, I also assured her that I’d pay for the gasoline and upkeep on *her* little ’29 Chevy, because I’d need it for my transportation. She agreed to let me give it a try. Within myself, I didn’t *really* know how I expected to dovetail it all in. Keeping up the work on The Grove and working at a “real” job wasn’t going to be easy! But for a “real” salary, on a regular basis, I was determined to try to *make* it work!

And now I’ll describe my job:

Much earlier in my memoirs I mentioned that the actual picking of the fruit was arranged through each Citrus Growers’ Association. In the winter months an association’s packing house would send their crews to pick the Navel oranges, and the Valencias were picked during the summer. So, of course, since Mother was a member of the Walnut (the *community*, not the product) Citrus Growers’ Association, our picking was scheduled by them.

A picker would first work from the ground, reaching as high as he could for fruit, then climb onto his three-legged ladder for the higher oranges. He carried a canvas bag over his shoulder, used clippers to remove the fruit from the branch, then dropped each orange into the bag.

Empty “field boxes,” which would hold about 65 pounds of oranges, would have been randomly distributed throughout a grove. When the picker’s bag was full, he’d walk to the field



box he was using and empty the contents of his bag into it. I couldn't believe how fast a picker worked! He seemed to strip the tree in nothing flat! Their pay was by the field-box-full, and a tally was kept by the "field boss."

When the field boxes were full, they'd be stacked – up to seven high – on the bed of a waiting truck. (As compared to the huge boxes that are used today, those field boxes were relatively small, and could be hand-carried. The ones used today require forklifts to move.) When the truck was fully loaded, the driver would transport the fruit to the packing house.

Once the fruit reached the packing house, the seven-high stacks of boxes would be off-loaded onto the receiving dock, and the "house crew" would take it from there.

Ray Stagg, the packing house manager, told me that my salary would be forty-cents an hour. (Boy! Forty-cents an hour! On a regular basis!) Then he showed me around the packing house, and explained the various operations. There was also a very important device that he had to explain to me, and show me how to work it: a TIME CLOCK! That was to be another "first" for me in this my new job; first, my social Security card, and now, for the very first time, I'd be punching a time clock!

From there, he took me to where I'd be working – the receiving dock! He explained how I would be loading the field boxes, one at a time, onto a roller conveyor which would move it along to a mechanical device which had the very sophisticated name of "the dumper." The action of the dumper was geared to dump the fruit into the cleaning vat; then, after dumping the fruit, the "highly sophisticated mechanism" (no computerized system control in those days!) would push the empty box aside, dump the next full box, push the empty aside . . . well, that was what it was supposed to do. If the operator (me!) didn't follow through with stacking the empties to get them out of the way, they would soon jam the dumper, and the whole line would shut down. What a mess!

I soon found out that the person in charge of this part of the operation (me!) had to be careful that this didn't happen. Believe me, that job really kept me on my toes! (I often wondered if some of the glitches were the reasons that the last guy had quit.)

From the cleaning vat, the oranges were split off into two shallow "troughs" that were filled with flowing water. The action of the water would move the fruit along between two rows of women who sorted the good oranges from the culls. The culls were diverted to an area where they'd be ground for livestock feed, or prepared into fertilizer, or some other kind of by-products.

On down the line somewhere, the oranges that had passed inspection were processed, then packed into 90-pound packing boxes. Those filled boxes were then stacked just *inside* the back door of the packing house. A freight car on a spur railroad track was waiting on the outside. A broad metal "catwalk" bridged the gap between the packing house door and the side door of the freight car, and that's where a very husky man by the name of "Dutch" took over. Using a hand dolly, he shoved stacks of those packing boxes across the catwalk and into the freight car. According to the incoming orders that had been processed through the shipping department, the filled freight car would be coupled together with a train that was ready to move out to market warehouses – in "faraway places."

The full field boxes on *my* receiving dock had to be moved fast so there would be room for the next truck-full of field boxes to be off-loaded. The dock had to be cleared of full boxes before I would be through for the day, and every once in a while I didn't finish up until after dark. Because of work that needed to be done on The Grove, there was more than once that I had to take some time off, and Ray would get someone to fill in for me.

As Ray and I had become acquainted, I found out that he played mandolin. I told him about our little group that got together to play our instruments, and he was very interested. Because of our mutual interest in music, a real friendship developed between us.

It was disappointing to me, and somewhat embarrassing, that as the summer of 1937 approached, I realized I'd have to quit my job – summer irrigating on the Grove always required a lot of time. Even though we were good friends by then, and Ray had been very understanding



when I'd needed to take off work for short periods of time, I knew I couldn't expect him to keep my job open for me. He needed someone on the receiving dock who could be there regularly.

I hated to give up that 40-cents an hour, but I got to hang onto my Social Security card!

### Flannery's Spraying Service

Once a year a citrus grower would have to have his orchard sprayed to control scale, red spider, and a number of other pests. Our spraying was done by a company that was owned by John Flannery, and his rigs were widely used throughout the entire Pomona and San Gabriel Valleys. The spraying was done during the summer months, so I'd gotten acquainted with John from the times his crew and rigs had worked in our grove.

As I'd watched the fellow spraying from the "tower" on the truck, and the other two working from the ground, it looked as if it might be a kind of fun job. Too, I knew that the company had several rigs, and was pretty sure the crews were moved around according to the work locations, and how long the different jobs required. In other words, I thought there might be a little more flexibility than there had been at the packing house, so one day when John happened to be there when his crew was working in our grove, I asked him if he had any openings on one of his rigs. I was surprised when he said yes, that he could use me, and that the pay would be fifty-cents an hour. (Boy! Ten cents more than I'd been making at the packing house! And I already had my Social Security card!)

I told John that I'd have to give priority to the work on our grove, but that I would let him know ahead of time when I wouldn't be able to work with the crew for a day, or so. He understood, and he said that it could be worked out. I knew it would keep me busy to disk, and then later to furrow out, before time for the next month's irrigating, but I sure wanted to give it a try. I was missing the income that I'd had from the time I worked in the packing house.

John told me that I'd be working with a crew that was currently spraying over near La Verne (in those days all of that area was nothing but orange and walnut groves, with an occasional farmhouse here and there!), and that they'd be working in other areas of the valley when they were finished there. I was to "report in" to Joe, the "rig boss," or foreman, at the La Verne location by six the following Monday morning.

The "work day" started as soon as it was light enough to see. If the temperature reached 90-degrees, the spraying had to be stopped until it hit 90-degrees again – on its way down. If it was a streak of consistently hot weather, Joe would sometimes tell us that we might just as well figure on shutting down for the rest of the day. For times that we just stopped for a couple hours, or so, the time was spent sitting around "shooting the breeze"; sometimes the guys played cards, or went into the closest town for something to eat. Fortunately, there were a lot of days that weren't that hot, so we could work all day without having any interruptions, and often we could work until almost dark.

And, just as I'd thought, spraying was a fun job – once I learned how to do it. The first thing I found out was that it wasn't as easy as it had always looked to be. Four guys were needed to operate the rig – one to drive the modified truck, and three sprayers. One of the sprayers worked in the tower that was a structure about fifteen feet above the ground. He stood on a platform which had support railings about waist-high, and it was his job to direct the nozzle of the eight-foot-long spray "gun" over the tree tops – on either side of the rig. The height of the tower was adjustable, in order to reach to the tops of both orange and walnut trees. Two fellows walked along on each side of the rig, and sprayed from the ground – in under the tree branches, around the trunk, and all over the outside. Occasionally the workers rotated the positions so they didn't get tired of doing exactly the same thing for the entire shift. (As I think back about working with the misting insecticide, it's scary to realize that evidently there was no concern about "hazardous materials" in those days.)



In addition to his spraying duties, the guy working from the tower had another very important responsibility. At his elevation he was very aware of the potential danger from electrical wires coming in contact with the metal tower, so part of his "equipment" was a three- or four-foot-long tree branch that was forked at the end. As the moving rig would approach the wires – *any* wires, telephone or electrical, he would alert the driver about the situation. The "tower man" would reach out with his forked tree branch and lift the wires, one at a time, over the tower. When all was clear he'd let the driver know, then they'd resume work as usual.

It sure kept the "tower guy" on his toes – the safety of the crew was dependent on him!

The insecticide tank on the rig truck held about five hundred gallons of spray, so periodically it would run dry. That meant the whole operation came to a stop for about ten minutes – until the tank was refilled.

That brings me to the subject of the "water wagon," as we called it. It was really the very lifeline of the spraying operation because it brought water to the rig from the closest fire hydrant. It was a conventional water truck with a tank that held in excess of five hundred gallons of water. It was filled at the top, as are all such tank trucks, and it had a spigot and hose at the rear end of the tank. The water wagon was also equipped with racks for carrying the containers of chemicals – the "bug juice," as we called it.

The water wagon would pull up just ahead of the waiting rig, and the driver would mix and pour the proper amount of insecticides into the tank on the rig, fill it with water, then he'd turn on the agitator and pumps to mix the "bug juice" and water. After he was sure everything was as it should be, he'd back the water wagon away from the rig, and we would resume our slow travel down row after row of trees. It would take twenty minutes, or so, to spray out, then around we'd go – again.

The entire spraying operation was well-monitored and controlled: The packing houses which had contracted to buy the fruit from the growers would send out their inspectors from time to time, without advance notice, of course! It was their responsibility to check the quality of the spraying and the insecticides that were being used. If anything was not satisfactory, the inspector would discuss the problem with the rig foreman. Depending on the severity of the problem, and if it was because of sloppy spraying (there should be no "missed" areas, every leaf should be wet on both sides!), there was always the possibility of having to do the job over again – without pay!

Somehow, I managed to dovetail the care of The Grove along with working on the spray rig, and Mr. Flannery was very helpful and cooperative. It wasn't easy, and I didn't have much spare time, but I sure was glad for the fifty-cents an hour – big money in those days!

## Chapter 25

### My New Gun

Even though quite some time had gone by since I had been part of the old gang in Pasadena, some of them still showed up at The Grove once in a while, and that was great! Of course I realized the major attraction was the opportunity it gave them to go squirrel hunting in the hills down south of Otterbein; nevertheless, it was great to have them stop by The Shack to tell me what was going on with my old friends.

Now that I was working at a job, in addition to taking care of The Grove, it kept me pretty busy, but I would sure go hunting with them – if I could possibly spare the time.

I had inherited a love for guns from my dad, and it was from him that I first learned how to take care of them, and to treat them with respect and caution. Mother was never overjoyed when Dad would take me with him to the target range in Eaton Canyon, just east of Pasadena, but those were great times for me! Those were reasons for my having chosen “Marksmanship” as one of the twenty-one merit badges required for Eagle Scout rank, during the time I was in the Boy Scouts.

Through the years I had acquired quite a collection of guns – some had been my dad’s, and others were from trading and purchasing that I’d done. All were small-caliber rifles, hand guns, and a 12-gauge shotgun. (The owner of the Pasadena gun shop, down on Raymond Avenue near Walnut Street, knew me very well! When we were living there, I was in the shop often for gun accessories and ammunition, or just to look at what he had on display in the showcase.)

So, when I could find the time, I enjoyed so much hunting squirrels and rabbits, or just shooting at targets, in the hills south of The Grove. Earlier in my memoirs I’ve mentioned how I loved doing that with my dad while he was still living. Since then I’d go down there with some other guys, or sometimes I’d just go by myself. So it was always fun when my old friends from Pasadena would show up at The Grove.

As we all grew older, oh, it was probably around sometime in 1937, that same bunch of guys told me about some of their newer experiences. There was George Good, my “pole vaulting buddy” from the earlier years in his back yard, and his brother, Fred, who was probably in his middle twenties by then. The Lowrey brothers, Roy and Gordon, were quite a bit older – I think one of them was well into his thirties by then, and that was *old*! But age made no difference, they were all interested in hiking, guns, and hunting, just like I was.

This one particular time they told me that they’d made a few trips to Utah to hunt mule deer! Boy! was I ever interested! But I knew my “arsenal” was lacking a deer rifle; until then I hadn’t given much thought to even wanting one.

Since they were all very responsible guys, I knew they would be a great group to go with. Hunting something larger than squirrels would seem like “big game” to me! Even though I doubted if Mother would give her consent for my going with them, I decided I wanted to be ready – just in case they asked me to go along, sometime.

Mother realized that I was wanting another gun, and I’ve already mentioned her feeling regarding the subject of guns in general. I knew that she’d really hit the ceiling if she knew just *why* I was wanting a particular kind of gun, so I hadn’t bothered to mention anything about my friends’ deer hunting trips to Utah. I had been very firm in telling her that I’d be using my own money for it; therefore, as far as I was concerned the issue was settled.



So the next time I took Mother to Pomona for grocery shopping, I went to the gun shop. There I saw exactly what I wanted: a Winchester 30-06 bolt-action rifle, and at a price I could handle (over a period of time, with a few payments). I also got a 4-power Weaver scope, and the gun shop owner offered to mount it for me free of charge. And of course I picked out a canvas case to protect it from scratches, etc.

So, with a sizeable down payment, and a few more to go, I was ecstatic. I don't remember exactly *when* I bought the gun, so I'm not sure if I used money from my work at the packing house, or from the spray rig job, and it really didn't matter – I was just glad to have money to call my own, and to be used for things I wanted and considered to be important to me. With my new rifle I'd be ready to go hunting for deer in Utah (or lions in Africa!) – if the guys asked me to go along, and *if* I could convince Mother that it would be a "safe and sane" thing to do, and that I wouldn't be neglecting any work on The Grove.

I was so excited . . . I could hardly believe that gun was mine! It was a beauty! When I got home with it, I put it in its case, then locked it up in the shed behind The Shack, along with my other guns. Then, just as soon as I could find the time, I took it down to my makeshift "target range" in the hills south of The Grove, so I could "bore sight" the scope. I was amazed at its accuracy at distances up to 200 yards!

I was so proud of my new possession! I could hardly wait to show it to my old friends the next time they came out to The Grove to go squirrel hunting!

## Chapter 26

### *The Purple Sage Ramblers*

In spite of the long hours of smudging, irrigating, working here and there (not just for me, but for all of the other guys and the one gal), and school (for some of them), nothing seemed to get in the way of our music group's "practice sessions." The hours we spent in practice were never drudgery for any of us – we enjoyed those times together!

Ed Worley continued to act as our leader – he was a good lead guitarist and did most of the vocal solos. Ed was definitely an all-around talented musician. By then, Jeff Johnson was a "regular" with his fiddle, and he and Ed did some great numbers. Irv Rockwell traded around with his different instruments – guitar, banjo, and the bass fiddle that belonged to his brother (but I think Irv used it more than Hank did!). Lilly (she preferred the name "Sal," so that was what we all called her) Moore sang female lead, and she also played guitar. Sal and Ed also did some really good duets.

As I've mentioned repeatedly, we spent a lot of time in practice, and because of everyone being busy we did most of our practicing in the evenings – usually at the Moores' house. Irv, Ed and I learned to do harmony yodels; I had made good progress with my guitar playing, and was doing vocal trio numbers with some of the others, too.

When any one of us had an extra dime, we would buy the sheet music for new numbers, or some of the good old ones – just anything that we thought was pretty and had meaningful words. Ed Worley did a lot of arranging for us, and he wrote the ditty that became our theme song.

Having terminated my work at the Blue Goose Citrus Packing House in no way jeopardized the friendship that had developed between Ray Stagg, the manager there, and myself. As I mentioned several pages back, he showed a lot of interest in our music group when I'd first told him about how we'd get together to play. I finally got up enough courage to ask Ray if he'd like to join with our group for a practice session, and he was so pleased about the invitation that he asked me to have the group come to his home for it. That was a real treat for all of us!

Ray's wife Margie was a very nice young woman, and they made each one of our "motley crew" feel right at home. As it turned out, Ray was not only outstanding with the mandolin, but he played banjo, too; and Margie had a good singing voice. As we got better acquainted with them, we found out that for some time they'd been doing duets in the church they attended in Pomona. They both seemed to fit right in with the others of us, and they enjoyed it as much as we did.

Margie Stagg was very enthusiastic about our activities, and she really got carried away when she found some purple western shirts on sale – somewhere. Just right for the name we had given our group: *The Purple Sage Ramblers*. She must have guessed at the sizes, and then no doubt she began hoping we'd all be able to reimburse her for the – oh, probably around \$2.50 that she'd paid for each one. They were really sharp looking – made from an "authentic western-gear" pattern. We had already thought we looked pretty good in our blue jeans – turned up at the bottoms, cowboy boots, and, of course, we were "topped off" with our cowboy hats. But those matching purple shirts added the touch of class that had been lacking!

By then we were being "called on" to play for some market openings (complete with those big "search lights" that beamed up into the night skies!), and some other local fun events. I don't remember which one of the older men was our "contact person," but he managed to get us



some very prestigious "bookings" – at least we all thought so! For some reason, one occasion is especially memorable for me: that was when we furnished the music for the Iowa State Picnic, which was held at Sycamore Grove, the well-known park in the Arroyo Seco location, south of Pasadena. Even though we played for some other state picnics, for some reason that one seems to hold special memories for me.

(Just an interesting sidelight: Back in those days, so many people who lived in Southern California had "migrated" from other states, so it was a popular thing for there to be official reunions of people from Kansas, Iowa, Oklahoma, etc.

(There would be "open-invitation" announcements in the large Los Angeles newspapers: entire families would pack picnic lunches, then drive to the designated park for a day of fun. A program of wholesome entertainment would have been planned by a committee in charge, and people would be sure to find someone they'd known "back home"; at least they would often find *someone* who'd known *someone* "back home." Those were great events.)

Usually, at those state picnics and market openings the "stage" that had been set up for us was a flatbed wagon with several bales of hay on it. Ed Worley made sure that we all got to the location early enough to get everything arranged the way he thought would work out best. We had to stand close together during our numbers in order to achieve some sort of unity of sound, since we had no microphones nor amplifiers. It was "bare bones," believe me, but we did get a lot of compliments – not much money, but a lot of compliments.

Somehow the word got around about *The Purple Sage Ramblers*, and we got to play for several occasions. Our group never posed any threat for *The Sons of the Pioneers*, or any of the other popular groups of the day, but we had a lot of good clean fun!

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### Theme Song of *The Purple Sage Ramblers*

-- Ed Worley, 1936

*The Purple Sage Ramblers* are riding,  
Herding their dogies along,  
Winding their way through the sagebrush,  
Singing an old range song.

From out where the sagebrush is purple,  
Where ponies and cowboys dwell,  
*The Purple Sage Ramblers* are bringing  
You songs from the old corral.

(Group *hums* in harmony during Ed's introductory remarks, then *sings*.)

Loping along o'er the rangeland,  
From out where the heavens are blue,  
*The Purple Sage Ramblers* are riding –  
Bringing their range cheer to you.

## Chapter 27

### My Good Friend Johnny Holmes

Many were the friends I made during those years in Otterbein, but none do I remember more fondly than Johnny Holmes. Johnny was probably about seven or eight years older than I, single, and a fine clean-living Christian. And he loved to fly! I guess that gave us a common bond since, as I've already mentioned, from the time I was just a little guy and had claimed Charles Lindbergh as "my hero," I'd had a great interest in airplanes, and anything concerning aviation.

Johnny lived with Frank Hostetler and his wife. I've already mentioned Ed Hostetler, Frank's brother, and those two men were Barbara Hostetler's uncles. I think Mrs. Frank Hostetler (I don't remember her first name) was Johnny's aunt, but I'm not real sure of the relationship. I don't remember ever hearing anything about Johnny's parents, but I don't believe they were still living. Frank and Mrs. Hostetler just seemed to be the only "family" he had.

The Frank Hostetlers had a very nice home down on the southwest corner of Nogales Street and Fifth Avenue (now Colima Road), and that residence was in the midst of many acres of both citrus and walnuts. Johnny was diligent in taking care of the groves, but he also had time for just being a good friend to all of the people in the community.

Almost every time Florence Ratliff took a bunch of the church kids somewhere in her car, Johnny went along to do the driving. His own car was a Model T touring car, so he didn't dare volunteer its use!

It doesn't take much imagination to remember the sound of Johnny coming down the street in that little Model T. It was his work car and the top was always folded down, and his cute little dog Brownie was always in the car with him, bouncing and barking all the way!

All of us kids thought Johnny and Florence would surely "get together some day," but even though they were very good friends, it didn't seem that they were ever romantically interested in each other. None of us ever gave any thought to the fact that Florence was at least ten years older than Johnny. (I think I've already mentioned somewhere that it was Alice Cooper who eventually became Johnny's bride.)

I don't have any idea what kind of a "salary arrangement" there was between Frank Hostetler and Johnny; I just know that Johnny didn't seem to ever have very much money, and that he'd really had to "scrounge" to pay for his flying time.

Since I'd been working at my various jobs for many of the farmers and ranchers in the area, and in the packing house and on the spray rigs, I had managed to put away a few dollars. I wanted to fly so very much, so one day I talked with Johnny about splitting the cost of some flying time with him. He was pleased to know of my willingness to do that - it would help him to acquire more "hours," and I would be getting flying instructions, though unofficially - a long-time dream of mine!

Every once in a while, when we both had some spare time - at the same time, we would drive to one of several airports and spend an hour, or so, flying. Mother was never real turned-on





JOHNNY BY THE  
CURTIS "ROBIN" AT "T&A"

My Good Friend

Many were the friends I made during those years more fondly than Johnny Holmes. Johnny was probably single and a fine clean-living Christian. And he loved to fly. As I've already mentioned, from the time I started flying, I had a great interest in aviation.

Johnny lived with Frank Hostetter and his wife. Frank's brother, and those two men were Barbara Holmes' (I don't remember her first name) was Johnny's aunt, but I'm not real sure of the relationship. I don't remember ever hearing anything about Johnny's parents, but I don't believe they were still living. Frank and Mrs. Hostetter just seemed to be the only "family" he had.

Johnny was in the southwest corner of Nogales. There was in the midst of many acres of the grove, but he also had time for the church kids somewhere in his car. Model T touring car, so he didn't drive.

AS AN ATC PILOT, JOHNNY  
SOMETIMES WOULD LAND AT  
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SPEND THE NIGHT WITH US.

(1943)

of the friends and teachers in the managed to put away a few dollars. I was about splitting the cost of some money to do that - it would help him through unofficially - a long-

time - at the same time, we would. Mother was never real turned-on



to the idea, but she like Johnny (and I was spending my own money!), so she didn't object too strenuously to us using *her* car to get to the airports.

It's hard to believe now, but we could rent a Piper Cub, an Aronca, a Taylorcraft, or one or two others, for \$5.00 an hour! (Unheard of today!) Probably the one we flew most often was a Curtis "Robin." It had a 185-HP radial engine, and we both loved flying it (although we had to use sign language to communicate because of the engine noise!).

One of Johnny's favorites was the sporty-looking, open cockpit Ryan S-T, the forerunner of the PT-22 trainer. That one was kept at the Alhambra airport, and it had to be reserved by calling ahead. We would fly it whenever we thought that we could afford it - I believe it was around \$15.00 an hour, so even by splitting the cost neither of us could afford that luxury very often!

I felt that I was getting very inexpensive flight instruction, and Johnny was getting to log more hours in his log book, which already showed about 2,000 hours. (He'd been chipping away at it, little by little, for quite some time; he was really anxious to qualify for his instructor's rating.)

Even though he was teaching me a lot, I knew I couldn't qualify for a private license without taking the usual 40 hours of dual instruction under a *licensed* instructor. That would have been more expensive than I could afford, and anyway, I knew Mother would put up *serious* objections if I ever mentioned such a thing.

Johnny and I remained very close friends for many years to come, and those times of flying together are among my very special memories. However, in recalling those "special memories," it is interesting to think about the airports that Johnny and I went to so frequently, and to realize that they have *all* been gone for many years. Let's see if I can recall a few:

There was the Monrovia airport, a small field in what was then the southern and, I believe, unincorporated portion of Monrovia. For years, now, that has been a maze of business and residential buildings, and probably part of the 210 Freeway runs near there somewhere.

In the late '20s, and well into the '30s, it was thought that the Alhambra airport would become the primary airport for Los Angeles, and all of the surrounding areas. It seemed to be "out in the middle of nowhere" in those days, and several of the commercial airlines - TWA, Western, and others - were already using it as their western terminal. Now, that location is a heavily congested part of the city of Alhambra.

"T & A", the airport that was near the intersection of Telegraph Road and Atlantic Avenue, is where we could rent the Curtis "Robin" that I mentioned as being one of our favorites. Now, that area is in the City of Commerce.

Vail Field, in Montebello, had several planes that we enjoyed flying. One was a Beechcraft - I don't remember the model, but it was fun to fly, as were the others. It's hard to believe there was once an airport in the Montebello that we know today.

Now, all are just nostalgic memories, but at the time they were very important experiences to both my good friend Johnny and me.

Note: Johnny Holmes was "best man" at our wedding in 1940. During the war he received his commission in, what in those days, was the Army Air Corp. and flew for the A.T.C. (Air Transport Command). He later became affiliated with the Flying Tigers and remained with them even after the war.



## Chapter 28

### Some "Last Straws!"

Early 1938, and nineteen years old. Sure, I was having fun flying with Johnny – whenever we had the time and the money. I thoroughly enjoyed being a part of *The Purple Sage Ramblers*. Being with my friends at the church, and going places with the Christian Endeavor group were filling a great need in my "social life." But working with the spray rig crew wouldn't start up again until close to summer.

No money was coming in, except when I could do something for one of the men in the neighborhood. What did my future hold? I was getting tired of the whole things – that feeling seemed to keep churning around inside of me! I'd known for a long time that I didn't want to be a citrus grower all of my life. But, how could I take care of The Grove, and go to college to learn something I was interest in?

"Citriculture?" No thanks!

### Then Came the Flood!

It was just after the first of the year, in 1938, that Southern California experienced one of its heaviest rains in many years. It was at about the same time the year before when the record-breaking freeze had finally tapered off, and now this! There was no time for self-pity, though! The flooding was prevalent in many areas, especially near rivers and major streams.

As I've already described, the area where The Grove was located was relatively flat with only a slight slope to the west. After the last irrigation of the summer, the furrows were not disked; instead, they were always left open to allow the winter's rains to drain down through The Grove. This worked fine – under ordinary conditions. The winter rain of 1938 turned out to be by no means "ordinary"!

Many pages ago I explained that the little house Mother and I were living in was nailed onto two telephone poles which were laid parallel to each other horizontally, partially submerged in the ground, and located at the northeast corner of our property. There was nothing very solid about any of the construction.

It wasn't unusual for it to begin raining at that particular time – it was "that time of the year." And rain meant that the temperature would stay high enough to not have to worry about smudging, and I was always in favor of that! But after several hours, instead of beginning to show signs of letting up, it kept getting harder and harder. There was no sub-ceiling in that little house, and I can still remember the sound of the hard rain pounding on the roof – just a few feet above our heads. At the rate it was coming down, if it didn't slacken before night, we knew we'd have a hard time sleeping because of the noise, and wondering what might be happening outdoors!

In front of the house, alongside the street, there was a drainage ditch which we could easily see from either of our two little front windows. There were two 3-foot diameter concrete pipes about eight feet long laying side by side in the bottom of the ditch to serve as a culvert for any ordinary flow of water. Dirt had been packed in solid over the tops of those pipes, bringing it up to the right level for the "bridge" which was made of a series of 2-by-12-inch planks, nailed together, then securely anchored across the culvert. Under normal conditions that made an excellent driveway for entering onto our property from Walnut Drive.

Sooner than Mother and I could believe, that ditch was full of water! In no time at all the culvert had become plugged with grasses and weeds that had gorged into it, and the flooding water was about to overflow the ditch and the bridge!

It was fast becoming apparent that this was considerable more than "just another winter rain"! It was evident that I had to hurry into immediate action to try to prevent any serious problems!

As quickly as I could, I pulled on my irrigating boots, put on a hat for some protection, grabbed a shovel, and began trying desperately to build a berm as a means of deflecting the water that was pouring from across Leisters' acreage to the ease, directly toward our little house on its precarious "foundation."

There were no sand bags to pile up, so I dug away! It seemed that each shovelful of mud would be immediately washed away by the torrents of water! Eventually, I was able to dig a curved trench with each end leading away from the house, and directing the water toward the open furrows.

Hoping that would hold for at least a while, I raked my boots across the mud scraper by the back door in an attempt to get them as clean as possible, then went into the little service porch and pulled them off. I dried myself off as good as I could, and went on into the house to try to get warmed up a bit. But, in just a few minutes I looked through the little window in the Shack and saw that the force of the water was in the process of quickly eroding the work that had just been done. It was virtually impossible to use the mud that was already saturated with water as an effective barricade against more water!

Mother was really frightened, and I guess I was too, but for me the challenge of combating the problem kept me from concentrating on the danger at hand.

Our woodpile was beginning to float! But that gave me an idea! I suddenly remembered that there were some old 1-by-12s stored by the shed, ones that I was intending to cut into firewood – someday. On went my boots and hat, again! I hurried out there and began pulling the boards out to where I could use them to reinforce the berm. I placed them on edge, then pounded 1-by-1-inch tree branch props, about four or five feet long, down into the mud to hold the wide boards in place. By doing this, I was able to stop – at least stop to some degree – the devastating affect of the water as it rushed onto the mud wall of the berm, and to get it deflected into the irrigation furrows and away from the house. I was so thankful that worked pretty well.

After what seemed like weeks, but I'm sure it was probably not more than a day or so, the skies cleared and the sun shone again. That was a welcome sight! Mother and I both were exhausted, and I think even she was becoming somewhat disenchanted with our situation.

Many times through the years, I've thought back on that experience and have thanked the Lord for the safety He provided us. Despite the work that I did, it was an absolute miracle that the little house on the telephone pole "foundation" was spared.

## **An Added Disaster!**

I don't remember just when it was, but it was sometime after the flood episode that Bob Handly and Kenny Neptune, our friend who lived over west somewhere, and I, decided we were



going to Big Bear for a day. We'd heard that there were to be some ski races up there, and we were ready for a day of fun. There was a major hindrance – it was a Sunday; but we ignored that, and we took off in Bob Handly's 1931 Chevy coupe. (I certainly knew better than ask Mother if I could use her car for a "Sunday anything": church was within easy walking distance, and that was always our Sunday activity.)

After we arrived at Big Bear, we rented ourselves a toboggan and had a lot of fun until time for the races to begin. Then we lined up with the many other spectators to watch the event. They were to be "timed" races, so there would be only one guy at a time on the course.

I had taken my box camera along – the one I'd gotten the year the Eastman Kodak Company was celebrating its Golden Anniversary by giving a free camera to any kid who'd be having his or her twelfth birthday that year. I had already taken several pictures, but wanted to get a few more. So, with my head down and trying to see through the little half-inch viewfinder, I was unaware of what had gone on out on the course. The skier had spilled and was out of control! He was sliding toward the crowd where the three of us guys were standing; one of his skis had come off and it was careening through the air – flip-flopping across the snow in our direction!

But with my head down, looking through the viewfinder, I still wasn't seeing what the crowd seemed to be so excited about – until the ski smashed below the knee of my left leg! The skier continued on his out-of-control slide, and eventually stopped dangerously close to a tree. He got up, brushed himself off, then came over to retrieve his ski – and to find out "how badly the guy who'd been hit was hurt." I assured him that I was OK, so he went on his way.

Then I tried walking! Right away I knew I had a problem! I had on high, laced-up boots (fortunately!), and I knew better than to attempt to remove the boot to investigate. I told the other guys I was sure it was just a bruised shin, so we stayed to watch more of the racing.

When we finally decided that we should be heading for home, and I tried to walk, I knew that it was more than an "everyday-type bruise."

I tried to not say much about it to the guys, but I'm sure it wasn't hard to notice the pained expression on my face. Bob Handly offered to go get the car while I waited, and that sounded like a very good idea to me! So, off he and Kenny went, and I stayed behind and watched the activities for a little longer. When they pulled up in the little Chevy coupe, they helped me in. There was no back seat to stretch out on, I was just scrunched in between them in the middle of the front seat, right where the gear shift lever and my left leg were in line with each other! But we managed.

All the way home they were giving me all kinds of helpful advice, such as, "Maybe you should see a doctor 'cause it might be broken, ya know." I wasn't needing their advice; I was pretty sure it was! And I sure wasn't looking forward to having to explain to Mother!

It seemed like it took forever, but we finally got home. Bob and Kenny helped me in; I'm sure Mother's expression would have looked no different if they had carried me in dead. The two guys said a very fast g-bye; they didn't even stick around long enough to hear Mother's first words of sympathy, "Well, it serves you right for going up there on Sunday." I felt too lousy to argue . . . anyway, I knew she was right.

By then it was Sunday evening, and there was no use trying to reach a doctor. There was nothing for me to do but loosen the boot some, to make more room for the increasing swelling, then try to figure out how I could be most comfortable during the long night ahead. I remember that I spent part of the time in one of our two rocking chairs (one was no more comfortable than the other; each had vertical wood slats for a back). I imagine I probably laid on my bed part of the time, boot and all, and maybe even slept a little because of being so tired.

The next morning Mother walked to Coopers' to use their phone, and called Dr. Shultz in Puente. She told him the situation and he set a time for coming out in the afternoon (thank goodness for good ol' house calls!)



When the doctor came that afternoon he examined the leg (the most painful part was removing the boot!), then confirmed that it was indeed broken, but it was what he called a "clean break." He told me that I had been right in leaving the boot on, that had prevented it from moving out of line (my scouting First Aid training had paid off!), so it wouldn't require setting.

Right there in The Shack, he splinted and taped the leg (I don't believe they used the plaster casts like they do today), and told me to stay off of it for at least a week. Dr. Shultz estimated, "It should be 'as good as new' in - oh, about six weeks."

Six weeks! Who was going to clean up the smudge pots and get them stored under the trees for the summer? Who was going to disk in the mustard cover crop? Who was going to get started with the harrowing and furrowing, and the many other things that had to be done in preparation for the coming spring and summer? It was obvious that for at least the next six weeks, or so, we were going to have to arrange for someone else to do my work. It was all very upsetting - especially to Mother.

My guitar was my constant companion - Mother just had to turn the volume up a little higher on the radio, so she could hear "Ma Perkins" and "Just Plain Bill." Playing my guitar was the most fun I had.

Eventually (it seemed like an eternity!) I was able to start hobbling around on the crutches that someone had loaned me, and once in a while Johnny Holmes, Merlin Elmore, Bob Handly, or some of the other guys, would stop by to shoot the breeze for a while, or to pick me up so I could go along with them for some of the young people's activities.

But some other good things started to shape up, too. After Mother had gotten over the initial shock of the episode, and had run out of gas as far as her lectures were concerned, she calmed down to the point that we were actually able to begin talking about the future - not just for me, but for both of us.

For quite some time, I'd been able to observe that she was getting tired of the inconveniences that she was having to put up with - I honestly don't know how she'd endured it for so long. It seemed that she was close to the point of admitting that she was growing weary of the "pioneer life" that was all we had going for us there in The Shack on The Grove. Sure, she'd figured that she was clearing about a thousand dollars an acre each year from the sale of the oranges, and that was really good money in those Depression years. But maybe other things would be important, too - like, "What was I going to do with the rest of my life?"

I told Mother that I really wanted to be in college, studying something that would prepare me for a vocation other than being a citrus grower. I sensed that Mother would love to return to Pasadena so she could visit with Emma Rinehart more often, and return to Immanuel Baptist Church where she had long-time friends. I know that Pasadena Junior College offered a great aero-tech course that included engineering.

Together, we decided that we'd start thinking in that direction. There would be much to be done in preparation for leaving The Grove so we knew it couldn't happen overnight, but Mother and I could finally agree that if there were to be a light at the end of the tunnel, we were going to have to prepare to light it ourselves.



## Chapter 29

### Lighting the "Tunnel Light"

Just as soon as I could get along without the crutches, I gradually began picking up the loose ends as far as the care of The Grove was concerned. Mother and I continued discussing the idea of returning to Pasadena, but since I couldn't enroll before the fall semester at the junior college, we decided it would be best to think toward going back sometime in the summer.

But where would we go? Both the Holliston and Mar Vista houses were rented, as they had been all along, and Mother thought it would be best to continue with the income from that arrangement. So, once again, just like when she and Dad had been preparing to move to California from Ohio, Mother got in touch with her Cousin Emma Rinehard and told her of our tentative plans. It was nice for Mother that Emma was so pleased to hear the news, and she assured Mother that one of the places at Rineway Court would be available when we were ready to move.

Together, Mother and I talked with Jeff Johnson, Mr. Keckley, and different ones, relative to the ongoing care of The Grove. I told her that I'd try to arrange my schedule so that I'd be able to go back there occasionally, if it became necessary, especially during smudging season. It was beginning to appear that Mother felt satisfied with the arrangements that were shaping up; I could tell that she was showing some signs of relief and anticipation.

But I don't think I was prepared for the mixed feelings that I was experiencing. For the past four years, getting on with my life apart from growing oranges had become more and more important to me; now that it was maybe going to happen, my emotions were bittersweet. I knew that I wanted to go back to school; I knew that Pasadena J.C. offered the aeronautical course I wanted. But I also knew that the gang of guys that I had grown up with when we lived there before weren't "kids" anymore. They'd all gone ahead with their educations, and they were now two years ahead of where I'd be starting back in.

Many of the same feelings that I'd had when we left Pasadena and moved to The Grove were crowding in on me again. By now, I had a lot of friends in the church, and scattered throughout the area. Flying with Johnny Holmes was one thing I enjoyed so very much, and I'd hate having to give that up. Then, the Purple Sage Ramblers would have to get along without me. I knew that would be no problem for them, but I also knew I was going to miss being a part of the group.

Of course it wasn't as though we would be moving back east, or somewhere else that would be a great distance, but I knew that it was going to be a whole new "ball game." And yet while I wanted to go, I was torn.

Those were the struggles that I carried inside of me while I was working on The Grove, which by then had become routine. Even though I had a lot of friends, and I did feel bad about leaving them, the anticipation of getting into the engineering course in college filled me with excitement.

I got in touch with John Flannery to find out if I could work for him for at least the beginning of the spraying season. I told him that we were planning to move "sometime before time for school to start," but that I could sure use the money – if he could use me until that time. It was great when he said he'd be glad to have me. I also told him about having broken my leg, and that it was still bothering me a little.

John thought for a minute, then I was relieved when he said that he didn't think the sore leg would be any problem – as long as I would be able to climb up the tower on the rig and get into what was called the "cage" (a triangular-shape platform that was enclosed all around by

support rails – one was just below a guy's waist, the other about halfway between his knees and ankles). John knew I'd be able to brace myself then, and could shift my weight off of my bad leg while I was spraying from up there. That way I wouldn't have to do any walking, like the guys working on the ground had to do. It was certainly going to be good to have that money for school expenses!

I contacted the admissions office at Pasadena J.C. to find out what all would be required in preparation for enrolling in the fall. I followed instructions, had my transcript of grades sent from Puente High School, then settled into as close to a "normal" routine as I could – while I was "marking time," getting ready to "pull stakes" – again! I was really hoping that I could soon begin to feel "settled."

It seemed good to finally be getting some light in our "tunnel."

### **The End of That Tunnel**

I believe it was about mid-August of 1938 that Jeff Johnson pulled his familiar stake-bed truck across the little bridge over the culvert and stopped in the yard at The Shack. The day had finally come to load up again, this time for the return trip back to Pasadena. It was just a few weeks shy of four years since we'd moved from there to The Grove.

Mother had heard from Emma Rinehart that the south "half" of the duplex that faced Los Robles Avenue had recently been vacated, and she was holding it for us. That had sounded good to Mother and me because it was larger than the bungalows that were on around the corner in the main part of Rineway Court (where I'd fallen into the fishpond, soon after we'd moved from Ohio, in 1921). Of course, as compared to The Shack, even one of those bungalow duplexes would have seemed large to us!

Even though we had a minimum of furniture in our small place, it took two or three trips with the truck. We left the cot, the camp stove, and a chair in The Shack, just like it had been for Dad in the past years, so I could stay there if I went out during smudging or irrigating seasons. I helped Jeff load the items that the Keckleys had so graciously stored for us. Then, after we'd unloaded in Pasadena, we went on over to the Rineharts' to get the kitchen table and chairs, the large dresser, and some other odds and ends that they had kept for us. It didn't seem possible that we'd again have room for all those things!

Mother and I were both excited when we at last climbed into the little '29 Chevy coup, crossed over that culvert bridge, turned west on Walnut Drive, leaving The Shack – as "home" – for the last time. Just a short distance, a couple of turns, then we were headed west on Valley Boulevard to drive the familiar route back to Pasadena.

And yet, it was a solemn time for each of us. We were leaving behind many experiences that would forever be indelibly impressed in our minds – some good, some not so good.

Indeed, those are remembered as "The Difficult Years."